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Illustrated Cabinet Edition

MY RELIGION
ON LIFE
THOUGHTS ON GOD
ON THE MEANING OF LIFE

By

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MY RELIGION

1884

MY RELIGION

I HAVE lived in the world for fifty-five years, and, with the exception of fourteen or fifteen years of my childhood, have passed thirty-five years as a nihilist in the full sense of the word, that is, not as a socialist and revolutionist, as which this word is generally understood, but as a nihilist in the sense of an absence of every faith.

Five years ago I came to believe in Christ's teaching, and my life suddenly became changed: I ceased desiring what I had wished before, and began to desire what I had not wished before. What formerly had seemed good to me, appeared bad, and what had seemed bad, appeared good. What took place with me was what takes place with a man who goes out on some business and suddenly decides on his way that he does not need that business, and returns home. And everything which was on the right is now on the left, and what was on the left is now on the right: the former desire — to be as far as possible away from the house — is now changed to a desire to be as close as possible to it. The direction of my life, my desires, became different: what was good and bad changed places. All this was due to the fact that I came to understand Christ's teaching differently from what I had understood it before.

I do not mean to interpret Christ's teaching, but want to tell only how I came to understand what simple, clear, intelligible, indubitable, universally accessible qualities Christ's teaching possessed, and how that which I now understood upturned my soul and gave me peace and happiness.

I do not wish to interpret Christ's teaching; the one thing I want is to prevent men from interpreting it.

All the Christian churches have always acknowledged that all men, who are not equal in learning and reason, — the wise and the foolish, — are equal before God, that the divine truth is accessible to all. Even Christ said that it is the will of God that what is hidden from the wise be revealed to the unwise.

Not all men can be initiated into the deepest secrets of dogmatics, homiletics, patristics, liturgics, hermeneutics, apologetics, and so forth, but all men can and ought to understand what Christ has told all the millions of simple, unwise men who have lived since his day. So it is this, which Christ told those simple people, who had not yet had the chance of turning to Paul, to Clement, to Chrysostom, and to others, for the elucidations of his teaching, that I had not understood before and came to understand then: and it is this that I wish to communicate to all men.

The robber on the cross believed in Christ, and was saved. Would it really have been bad and harmful for any man, if the robber had not died on the cross, but had come down from it, and had told all men how he came to believe in Christ?

Even so I, like the robber on the cross, believed in Christ, and was saved. This is not a far-fetched comparison, but a very close approximation to that spiritual condition of despair and terror before life and death, in which I was formerly, and of that condition of peace and happiness, in which I now am.

Like the robber, I knew that I lived badly, that the majority of men around me lived as badly. Like the robber, I knew that I was unhappy and suffered, and that around me men were as unhappy and suffered as much, and saw no way out, except death, from this condition. Like the robber on the cross, I was nailed by some power to this life of suffering and of evil.

And as for the robber there was in store the terrible darkness of death after senseless sufferings and the evil of life, so also the same was in store for me.

In all this I was precisely like the robber, but there was this difference between the robber and me, that he was already dead, while I was still living. The robber could believe that his salvation would be there, beyond the grave: but I could not believe that, for besides the life beyond the grave, I still had to live here. And I did not understand this life. It seemed terrible to me. Suddenly I heard Christ's words, and I understood them, and life and death no longer appeared to me as an evil, and instead of despair I experienced the joy and happiness of life, which are not impaired by death.

Can it really harm any one, if I tell how this happened with me?

I.

I HAVE written two large works, the Critique of Dogmatic Theology, and a new translation and harmonization of the four gospels with explanations, in which I explain why I had not comprehended Christ's teaching, and how I came to understand it. In these works I try methodically, step by step, to analyze everything which conceals the truth from men, and verse after verse translate anew, collate, and harmonize the four gospels.

This work has been going on for six years. Every year, every month, I find new explanations and confirmations of the fundamental idea, correct the mistakes which have crept in through hurry and overzeal, and add to what has been done. My life, of which not much is left, will, no doubt, be ended before this work. But I am convinced that this labour is needed, and so I do what I can, while I live.

Such has my assiduous external work been on the theology, on the gospels. But the internal work, of which I wish to tell here, was different. It was not a methodical investigation of the theology and texts of the gospels, but a sudden removal of everything which concealed the very meaning of the teaching, and a sudden illumination by the light of truth. It was an event which was like what would happen to a man who from a false drawing tries to reconstruct a statue out of a heap of small pieces of marble, when suddenly he discovers from one insignificant piece that it is an entirely different statue, and, having begun the new reconstruction, suddenly sees the confirmation of his idea, instead of the former incoherency of the fragments, in every piece, which with all its lines combines with the neighbouring pieces and forms one whole. It was this that happened with me. And of this I wish to tell.

I want to tell how I found this key for the comprehension of the teaching of Christ, who revealed to me the truth with a clearness and a conclusiveness that exclude every doubt.

This discovery was made by me in the following manner: ever since the first period of my childhood, when I began to read the Gospel for myself, I was most touched and affected by that teaching of Christ, where he preaches love, meekness, humility, self-renunciation, and retribution of evil with good. Such always remained for me the essence of the Christian teaching, and I loved it with my heart, and in the name of it I, after despair and unbelief, recognized as true the meaning which the labouring people ascribe to the Christian life, and in the name of it I subjected myself to the beliefs which these people confess that is to the Orthodox Church.

But, in submitting to the church, I soon observed that I should not find in the church doctrine the confirmation and elucidation of those principles of Christianity which to me seemed to be of greatest importance: I observed that this essence of Christianity, which was so dear to me, did not form the chief point in the church doctrine. I observed that that which to me seemed to be of most importance in Christ's teaching was not regarded as such by the church. The church regarded something else as of greatest importance. At first I did not ascribe any meaning to this peculiarity of the church teaching.

Well, I thought, in addition to the meaning of love, humility, self-renunciation, the church recognizes also the dogmatic, the external meaning. This meaning is foreign to me, even repels me, but there is nothing harmful in it.

But the longer I lived, submitting to the church doctrine, the more obvious it became to me that this peculiarity of the church doctrine was not so immaterial as it had seemed to me to be at first. What repelled me from the church was the strangeness of the church dogmas, and the recognition and approval given by the church to persecutions, capital punishment, and wars, and the mutual rejection of the various creeds; but what shattered my confidence in it was that indifference to what to me seemed to be the essence of Christ's teaching and the bias for what I regarded as inessential. But I could not make out what was wrong; I could not make it out, because the church doctrine, far from denying that which to me seemed to be of prime importance in Christ's teaching, fully recognized it, but it did so in such a way that what was of prime importance in Christ's teaching did not occupy the first place. I could not rebuke the church for denying the essential things, but the church recognized them in such a way that they did not satisfy me. The church did not give me what I expected from it.

I passed from nihilism to the church only because I was conscious of the impossibility of living without faith, without the knowledge of what is good and what bad, in spite of my animal instincts. I hoped to find this knowledge in Christianity. But Christianity, as it presented itself to me at that time, was only a certain, very indefinite mood, from which did not result clear and obligatory rules of life. I turned to the church for these rules. But the church gave me such rules as did not in the least bring me nearer to the Christian mood, which was so dear to me, and only removed me farther from it, and I could not follow it. The life which was based on the Christian truths was necessary and dear to me; but the church gave me rules of life which were entirely foreign to the truths which I valued so highly. I did not need the rules which the church gave me about the belief in dogmas, about the observance of sacraments, fasts, and prayers, and there were none that were based on the Christian truths. Moreover, the church rules weakened, and at times destroyed outright, that Christian mood, which alone gave me the meaning of my life. What troubled me more than anything else was that all the human evil — the condemnation of private individuals, of whole nations, of other creeds, and the executions and wars, which resulted from such condemnations — was all justified by the church. Christ's teaching about meekness, about refraining from condemnations, about forgiveness of offences, self-renunciation, and love, was exalted by the church in words, and yet, in fact, that which was incompatible with this teaching was justified by it.

Could it be that Christ's teaching was such that these contradictions ought to exist? I could not believe it. Besides, it had always seemed strange to me that, in so far as I knew the Gospel, those passages on which the definite rules of the church about the dogmas were based were the most obscure of all, while those from which resulted the execution of the teaching were most definite and clear. And yet, the dogmas and the obligations of a Christian which result from them were defined by the church in a most clear and precise manner; while the execution of the teaching was mentioned by it in most obscure, hazy, mystical terms.

Is it possible Christ had that in mind, when he imparted his teaching to men? The solution of my doubts I could find only in the gospels, and I read and re-read them. Out of all the gospels the sermon on the mount always stood out as something special, and I read it oftenest of all. Nowhere else does Christ speak with such solemnity as in this place; nowhere else does he give so many moral, clear, intelligible rules, which reëcho at once in the hearts of all men; nowhere does he speak to a greater assembly of all kinds of simple people. If there existed clear, definite Christian rules, they must be expressed here. In these three chapters of Matthew I tried to find an explanation of what troubled me. Many, many a time did I read the sermon on the mount, and every time I experienced the same feelings of enthusiasm and meekness of spirit, as I read the verses about offering the cheek, giving up the coat, making peace with all men, and loving our enemies, and the same feeling of dissatisfaction. The words of God, which were directed to all men, were not clear. There was demanded a too impossible renunciation of everything, which destroyed life itself, as I understood it, and so the renunciation of everything, I thought, could not be a peremptory condition of salvation. And as long as it was not a peremptory condition of salvation, there was nothing definite and clear.

I read not only the sermon on the mount, but also all the gospels and all the theological commentaries upon them. The theological explanations, that the utterances of the sermon on the mount were an indication of that perfection toward which man must strive, but that the fallen man was abiding in sin and could not with his powers attain this perfection, and that man's salvation was in faith, prayer, and grace, did not satisfy me.

I could not agree to this, because it had always seemed strange to me why Christ, who knew in advance that the execution of his teaching was impossible with the human powers alone, gave such clear and beautiful rules, which had reference directly to every individual man. As I read these rules, it seemed to me that they had special reference to me and demanded that I, if no one else, should execute them.

As I read these rules, I was always overcome by the joyful certainty that I could henceforth, from that very hour, do all that. I wanted and tried to do it; but the moment I experienced a struggle in the execution, I involuntarily recalled the teaching of the church that man is weak and cannot do it of himself, and I weakened.

I was told that we must believe and pray.

But I felt that I had little faith, and so could not pray. I was told that I must pray so that God might give me faith, that faith which gives prayer, which gives that faith, which gives that prayer, and so on, *ad infinitum.*

But reason and experience showed me that only my efforts to carry out Christ's teaching could be real: and so, after many, many vain searchings and studies of what had been written in proof of the divinity of this teaching and in proof of its un-divinity, after many doubts and sufferings, I was again left alone with my heart and with the mysterious book before me. I could not give it the meaning which others ascribed to it, and could find no other meaning for it, and yet could not reject it. And only after I had lost faith in all the interpretations of both the learned criticism and the learned theology, and had rejected them all, according to Christ's saying, If you receive me not as do the children, you will not enter into the kingdom of God, did I suddenly understand what I had not understood before. I did not understand because I in some way artificially and cunningly transposed, collated, interpreted; on the contrary, everything was revealed to me because I forgot all interpretations. The passage which for me was the key to the whole was Verses 38 and 39 of the fifth chapter of Matthew. It hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil. I suddenly for the first time understood the last verse in its direct and simple meaning. I understood that Christ said precisely what he said. And immediately, not something new appeared, but there disappeared that which obscured the truth, and truth arose before me in all its significance. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say, Do not resist evil. These words suddenly appeared entirely new to me, as though I had never met them before.

Formerly, when I read this passage, I always, by some strange blindness, omitted the words, But I say, Do not resist evil. It was as though these words did not exist, or had no definite meaning.

Later I frequently had occasion in my conversations with many, very many Christians, who knew the Gospel, to observe the same blindness in respect to these words. Nobody remembered these words, and often, when talking about this passage, Christians would take up the Gospel in order to assure themselves that the words were there. Similarly I used to omit the words, and began to understand only from the next words on, But whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him, etc. And these words always presented themselves to me as a demand for sufferings and privations which are not proper to human nature. These words affected me, and I felt that it would be nice to fulfil them. At the same time I felt that I should never be able to fulfil them, merely to suffer. I said to myself, Very well, I will turn my other cheek to a man, and he will strike me a second time; I will give them what they ask of me, and they will take everything from me. I shall have no life. Life is given to me, why should I deprive myself of it? Christ could not have asked for this.

Formerly I used to say that to myself, imagining that in these words Christ praised sufferings and privations, and, praising them, was speaking in exaggeration and so without precision or clearness; but now that I came to understand the saying about non-resistance to evil, it became clear to me that Christ did not exaggerate at all and did not demand any suffering for the sake of suffering, but meant very definitely and clearly what he said.

He said, Do not resist evil; and doing so, remember that there will be found people who, having struck you on one cheek and finding no resistance, will strike you on the other also; having taken your coat, will take your cloak also; having made use of your labour, will compel you to work more; who will take without returning. And when this happens, you must still not resist evil. Continue to do good to those who will strike and offend you.

And when I comprehended these words, in the manner in which they were said, everything which had been dark became clear, and what had seemed exaggerated became entirely clear. I understood for the first time that the centre of gravity of the whole thought was in the words, Do not resist evil, and that what follows is only an explanation of the first proposition. I understood that Christ does not at all command us to offer our cheek and give up our coat in order that we may suffer, but commands us not to resist evil, and says that, in doing so, we may also have to suffer. Just as a father, sending his son out on a long journey, does not order him to stay awake nights, go without eating, be drenched, and freeze, when he says, Travel on the road, and even if you are to be drenched and frozen, keep to the road, — so Christ does not say, Offer your cheek, suffer, but, Do not resist evil, and no matter what may happen to you, do not resist evil.

These words, Do not resist evil, understood in their direct sense, were for me indeed the key that opened everything to me, and I marvelled how I could have so perverted the clear, definite words. You have been told, A tooth for a tooth, and I say, Do not resist evil, and no matter what evil persons may do to you, suffer, give up, but do not resist evil. What can be clearer, more intelligible, and more indubitable than this? I needed only to understand these words in a simple and direct manner, just as they were said, and everything in Christ's teaching, not merely in the sermon on the mount, but in all the gospels, everything which had been tangled, became clear; what had been contradictory became concordant; and, above all else, what had seemed superfluous became necessary. Everything welded into one whole and each thing indubitably confirmed everything else, as pieces of a broken statue, when they are recomposed as they ought to be. In this sermon and in all the gospels the same teaching of non-resistance to evil was confirmed on all sides.

In this sermon, as in all other passages, Christ represents to himself his disciples, that is, the men who carry out the rule of non-resistance to evil, not otherwise than men who offer their cheek and give up their cloak, as persecuted, beaten, and poor.

Christ says again and again that he who has not taken the cross, who has not renounced everything, that is, he who is not prepared for all the consequences arising from the execution of the rule of non-resistance to evil, cannot be his disciple. To his disciples Jesus says, Be mendicants; be prepared, while not resisting evil, to receive persecutions, suffering, and death: he prepares himself for suffering and death, without resisting the evil men, and sends away Peter, who is sorry about it, and dies himself, forbidding men to resist evil, and without becoming untrue to his teaching.

All his first disciples carry out this rule of non-resistance, and pass all their life in poverty and persecutions, and never repay evil with evil.

Consequently Jesus says exactly what he says. We may affirm that the constant execution of this rule is very difficult; we may not agree with this, that every man will be blessed in carrying out this rule; we may say that it is foolish, as the unbelievers say, that Christ was a dreamer and idealist, who uttered impracticable rules, which his disciples in their foolishness carried out; but we cannot fail to admit that Christ very clearly and definitely said what he wanted to say, namely, that man, according to his teaching, must not resist evil, and that, therefore, he who has accepted his teaching cannot resist evil. And yet neither believers, nor unbelievers, understand this simple and clear meaning of Christ's words.

II.

When I understood that the words, Do not resist evil, meant, Do not resist evil, all my former conception of the meaning of Christ's teaching suddenly changed, and I was horrified, not at the lack of comprehension, but at the strange comprehension of the teaching, in which I had lived until then. I knew, we all know, that the meaning of the Christian teaching is in the love for men. To say that we must offer our cheek and love our enemy is to express the essence of Christianity. I knew this since childhood, but why had I not understood these simple words in a simple manner, and why had I looked in them for some allegorical meaning? Do not resist evil, means, Never resist evil, that is, never use violence, that is, do not commit an act which is always opposed to love. And if thou shalt be offended in doing so, endure the insult, and still use no violence against others. He has said this as clearly and as simply as it can be said. How, then, could I, who believed, or tried to believe, that he who said this was God, say that it was impossible to do this with one's own strength?

My master says to me, Go and chop some wood; and I reply to him, I cannot do this with my own strength. When I say so, I say one of two things: either that I do not believe in what my master is telling me, or that I do not wish to do what my master wants me to do. Of the commandment of God, which he gave to be kept, and of which he said, He who shall keep it and teach so, shall be accounted greater, and so forth, and of which he said that only those who fulfil it receive life, of the commandment, which he himself kept, and which he expressed so clearly and simply that there cannot be any doubt as to its meaning, of this commandment I, who had never even attempted to keep it, said, Its execution is impossible with my own strength, — I must have a supernatural aid.

God came down upon earth to give salvation to men. The salvation consists in this, that the second person of the Trinity, God the Son, suffered for men, redeemed their sin before the Father, and gave men the church, in which is preserved the grace that is transmitted to those who believe; besides all this, this God the Son gave men a teaching and an example of life for salvation. How, then, could I say that the rules of life, which are so simply and so clearly expressed for all, are so hard to execute that this cannot be done without supernatural aid? He not only said nothing of the kind, but said definitely, By all means fulfil it, and he who will not fulfil it, will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And he never said that the execution was difficult, but, on the contrary, My yoke is good, and my burden light; John the evangelist said, His commandments are not hard. How, then, could I say that that which God has commanded men to do; that that, the execution of which he so clearly defined, and of which he said that it was easy to do it; that that which he himself executed as a man, and which his first followers executed; how could I say that this execution was so difficult that it was even impossible without supernatural aid?

If a man puts all the effort of his mind on destroying a certain law, what more effective objection, in order to destroy this law, could the man bring forward than that this law is by its essence impracticable, and that the lawgiver held in respect to his law that it was impracticable, and that supernatural aid is necessary in order that it be executed? It was precisely this that I thought in respect to the commandment of non-resistance to evil.

I tried to recall how and when this strange idea had got into my mind that Christ's law was divine, but that it could not be executed; and analyzing my past, I understood that this idea had never been communicated to me in all its nakedness (it would have repelled me), but that I, imperceptibly to myself, had imbibed it with my mother's milk from my earliest childhood, and that my subsequent life only confirmed me in this strange delusion.

I have been taught since childhood that Christ is God and his teaching divine, but, at the same time, I was taught to respect the institutions which through force secured my immunity from evil, — I was taught to respect these institutions as sacred. I was taught to resist evil, and was impressed with the idea that it is base and disgraceful to submit to evil and to suffer from it, and praiseworthy to resist it. I was taught to judge and punish. Then I was taught to make war, that is, to resist evil men with murder, and the military caste, of which I was a member, was called the Christ-loving military, and their activity was sanctified by a Christian blessing. Besides, from childhood up to my manly estate I had been taught to respect what directly opposed Christ's law. To resist the offender, to avenge by the use of violence a personal, family, national insult, — all this they not only did not deny, but impressed upon me as something beautiful and not contrary to Christ's law.

Everything which surrounded me, my family's peace and their safety and my own, my property, everything was based on the law which Christ rejected, on the law, A tooth for a tooth.

The church teachers taught that Christ's teaching was divine, but that its execution was impossible on account of human weakness, and that only Christ's grace could coöperate in its execution. The worldly teachers and all the structure of life directly recognized the impracticability and visionariness of Christ's teaching, and by their words and deeds taught what was contrary to this teaching. This recognition of the impracticableness of God's teaching had so slowly and so imperceptibly percolated in me and become habitual with me, and to such a degree coincided with my lusts, that I had never before noticed the contradiction in which I lived. I did not see that it was not possible at one and the same time to confess Christ the God, the foundation of whose teaching is non-resistance to evil, and consciously and calmly to work for the establishment of property, of courts, government, and army; to establish a life which was contrary to the teaching of Christ, and to pray to this Christ that the law of non-resistance to evil and of forgiveness be fulfilled among us. It did not yet occur to me, what now is so clear, that it would be much simpler to arrange and establish life according to Christ's law, and then only to pray for courts, executions, and wars, if they are so necessary for our good.

And I understood whence my delusion came. It arose from confessing Christ in words and denying him in fact.

The proposition about non-resistance to evil is a proposition which binds the teaching together, but only when it is not an utterance but a rule which must be executed, — when it is a law.

It is indeed a key which unlocks everything, but only when the key is put into the lock. The recognition of this proposition as an utterance, which is impossible of execution without supernatural aid, is an annihilation of the whole teaching. How can such a teaching, from which the fundamental, binding principle has been removed, present itself otherwise than as impossible? But to unbelievers it simply appears stupid, and it cannot appear in any other light.

To put up an engine, fire the boiler, set the engine in motion, and not connect the transmitting belt, — it is precisely this that has been done with Christ's teaching, when they began to teach that a man may be a Christian without executing the proposition about non-resistance to evil.

A little while ago I read the fifth chapter of Matthew with a Jewish rabbi. At nearly every utterance the rabbi said, "This is in the Bible, this is in the Talmud," and pointed out to me in the Bible and in the Talmud utterances which very closely resembled those in the sermon on the mount. But when we reached the verse about non-resistance to evil, he did not say, This, too, is in the Talmud, but only asked me with a smile, "And do the Christians execute this? Do they offer the other cheek?"

I could make no reply, the more so, since I knew that just at that time the Christians not only failed to offer their cheeks, but struck the Jews on the cheeks which they turned to them. Still it interested me to know whether there was anything like it in the Bible or in the Talmud, and I asked him about it.

He said, No, that is not there, but tell me, Do the Christians keep this law? With this question he told me that the presence of such a rule in the Christian law, which not only no one executes, but which also the Christians consider impracticable, is a recognition of the irrationality and uselessness of this rule. And I could not answer him.

Now that I have come to understand the direct meaning of the teaching, I see clearly the strange self-contradiction in which I had lived. Since I recognized Christ as God and his teaching as divine and, at the same time, arranged my life contrary to this teaching, what was there left for me to do but recognize this teaching as impracticable? In words I recognized Christ's teaching as sacred, but in reality I did not at all confess the Christian teaching, and bowed before non-Christian institutions, which on all sides embraced my life.

The whole Old Testament says that the misfortunes of the Jewish people were due to their believing in false gods, and not in the true God. Samuel, in the First Book, Chapters VIII. and XII., accuses the people of having, to their previous transgressions against God, added a new one: in the place of God, who was their king, they placed a man-king, who, in their opinion, was to save them. Do not believe in *thohu*, emptiness, Samuel says to the people (xii. 12). It will not help you, and will not save you, for it is *thohu*, empty. If you do not wish to perish with your king, keep the one God.

Now the belief in this *thohu*, in these empty idols, veiled the truth from me. On the way toward it, barring its light, stood before me those *thohu*, which I was unable to renounce.

The other day I went through the Borovítski Gate; in it sat an old man, a lame mendicant, wrapped to his ears in a dirty rag. I took out my purse, to give him something. Just then a young, dapper, red-cheeked grenadier, in a Crown fur coat, came running down from the Kremlin. When the mendicant saw the grenadier, he jumped up in fright and ran limping toward the Alexander Garden. The grenadier started in pursuit after him, but stopped before reaching him, and began to curse the mendicant for disobeying the order not to sit down in the gate. I waited in the gate for the grenadier to return. When he was in a line with me, I asked him whether he could read.

"I do, what of it?"

"Have you read the Gospel?"

"I have."

"Have you read, And he who shall feed the hungry?"

I quoted the passage to him. He knew it, and listened to it, and I saw that he was troubled. Two passers-by stopped to listen. It was evident that the grenadier was pained to feel that he, who excellently executed his duty, which was to drive people away from where they were not permitted to stay, suddenly appeared unjust. He was confused and, apparently, was trying to find a justification. Suddenly a light gleamed in his bright black eyes, and he turned sidewise toward me, as though ready to walk away.

"Have you read the Military Regulation?" he asked.

I told him that I had read it.

"Then don't talk," said the grenadier, with a victorious toss of his head, and, wrapping himself in the fur coat, he went dashingly back to his place.

This was the only man in my whole life who in a strictly logical way solved that eternal question, which in our social structure had stood before me and stands before every man who calls himself a Christian.

III.

THEY speak in vain who say that the Christian teaching touches the personal salvation, and not the general questions of state. This is only a bold and barren assertion of a most palpable untruth, which is destroyed at the first serious thought of it. Very well, I will not resist evil, will offer my cheek as a private individual, I say to myself, but there comes an enemy, or nations are oppressed, and I am called to participate in the struggle with the evil men, — to go and kill them. I must inevitably solve the question, In what does the service of God and the service of *thohu* consist? Must I go to war, or not go to war? I am a peasant; I am chosen an elder, a juryman, and am compelled to swear, to judge, to punish, — what must I do? Again I must choose between the law of God and the law of man. I am a monk, who lives in the monastery, and the peasants have taken our mowing away, and I am sent out to take part in the struggle with the evil men, to enter a complaint in the court against the peasants. Again I must choose.

Not a single man can get away from the necessity for a solution of this question. I am not speaking of our class of society, almost the whole of whose activity consists in resisting the evil, being warriors, men of the legal profession, administrators; there is no private individual, no matter how modest he may be, who is not confronted with this necessity for a solution between serving God and keeping his commandments, and serving *thohu*, the institutions of state. My personal life is interwoven with the social, political life, and the political life demands of me a non-Christian activity, which is directly opposed to Christ's commandment. Now, with the universal military service and the participation of all in the court in the capacity of jurymen, this dilemma is with striking distinctness placed before all people. Every man has to take up the weapon of murder, the gun, the knife, and, though he does not kill, he must load his gun and whet his knife, that is, be prepared to commit murder. Every citizen must come to court and be a participant in the court and in the punishments, that is, every man has to renounce Christ's commandment of non-resistance to evil, not only in words, but in action as well.

The grenadier's question — the Gospel or the Military Regulation, the law of God, and the law of men — is standing now before humanity as it did in the time of Samuel. It stood also before Christ and before his disciples. It stands before those who want to be Christians in fact; it stood also before me.

Christ's law, with his teaching of love, humility, self-renunciation, had always before touched my heart and attracted me. But on all sides, in history, in the contemporary life which surrounded me, in my own life, I saw the opposite law, which was contrary to my heart, my conscience, my reason, which pampered my animal instincts. I felt that, if I accepted Christ's law, I should be left alone, and I might fare ill: I might be persecuted and have to weep, precisely what Christ said about it. If I accepted the human law, all would approve of me, and I should be quiet and secure, and all the cunning of reason would be at my service, pacifying my conscience. I would laugh and rejoice, precisely what Christ said about it. I felt this, and so not only failed to penetrate Christ's law, but tried to understand it in such a way that it should not keep me from living my animal life. But it was not possible to understand it thus, and I did not understand it at all.

In this lack of comprehension I now reached a remarkable degree of blindness. As an example of such a blindness I will adduce my former comprehension of the words, Judge not, that ye be not judged (Matt. vii. 1). Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned (Luke vi. 37). The institution of the courts, in which I took part, and which protected my property and made me secure, seemed so unquestionably sacred and so far from breaking God's law that it never occurred to me that this utterance could mean anything but that one should not judge his neighbour in words. It did not occur to me that Christ could in these words have spoken of courts, of the provincial court, the criminal court, the circuit and justice of the peace courts, and all kinds of senates and departments. Only when I comprehended the direct meaning of the words about non-resistance to evil, the question presented itself to me as to what Christ's relations were to all these courts and departments. When I saw that he would have rejected them, I asked myself, Does it mean only, Do not judge your neighbour in words? Does it not mean also, Do not sit in judgment, do not judge your neighbour in human institutions?

In Luke, Chapter VI., from Verse 37 to Verse 49, these words are said immediately after the teaching about non-resistance to evil and repaying evil with good. Immediately after the words, Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful, it says, Judge not, and ye shall not be judged. Does not this mean that not only is one not to judge his neighbour, but also not to establish courts and not to judge his neighbours in them? I asked myself. And I need only to put this question to myself, in order that my heart and common sense should immediately answer me in the affirmative.

I know that the comprehension of these words is startling at first. It startled me also. To show how far removed I was from the proper understanding, I will confess a disgraceful stupidity: after I had become a believer and read the Gospel as a divine book, I, upon meeting prosecuting attorneys and judges of my acquaintance, used to say to them in a playful way, And so you still continue to judge, though it says, Judge not, that ye be not judged! I was so sure that these words could not mean anything but a prohibition of gossip, that I did not understand that terrible blasphemy which I was uttering in saying those words. I had reached such a point that, having convinced myself that these clear words did not mean what they meant, I playfully used them in their real meaning.

I will tell in detail how there was destroyed in me every doubt as to this, that the words could not be understood in any other sense than that Christ forbids all human institutions of courts, and could not say anything else with these words.

The first thing that startled me, when I came to understand the commandment about non-resistance to evil in its direct sense, was that the human courts not only failed to agree with it, but were positively opposed to it, and opposed to the meaning of the whole teaching, and that, therefore, Christ must have rejected the courts, if he thought of them.

Christ says, Do not resist evil. The purpose of the courts is to resist evil. Christ prescribes doing good in return for evil. The courts retaliate evil with evil. Christ says, Make no distinction between the good and the bad. All the courts do is to make this distinction. Christ says, Forgive all men; forgive, not once, not seven times, but without end; love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. The courts do not forgive, but punish; they do not do good, but evil, to those whom they call enemies of society. Thus it turns out, according to the meaning, that Christ must have rejected the courts.

But, I thought, maybe Christ had nothing to do with human courts and did not think of them. But I see that

that cannot be assumed: From his very birth until his death, Jesus came in contact with the courts of Herod, of the sanhedrim, and of the high priests. And, indeed, I see that Christ frequently speaks directly of courts as of an evil. He says to his disciples that they will be judged, and tells them how they must bear themselves in court. Of himself he says that he will be condemned, and he shows how we must act toward a human court.

Consequently, Christ thought of those human courts which were to condemn him and his disciples, and which have condemned millions of people. Christ saw this evil and directly pointed to it. In passing judgment on the harlot, he denies the court outright, and shows that a man cannot condemn, because he is himself guilty. The same idea he expresses several times, saying that with a dust-filled eye it is impossible to see the dust in another man's eye, that a blind man cannot guide the blind. He even explains what follows from such a delusion. The pupil will be like the teacher.

But, perhaps, having expressed this in respect to the condemnation of the harlot, and having pointed out the common human weakness in the parable of the mote, he, none the less, does not forbid turning to human justice in order to find defence against evil men; but I see that this can in no way be conceded.

In the sermon on the mount he turns to all men and says, And if a man wants to take away thy coat by suing thee at law, give him thy cloak also. Consequently, he forbids all to go to law.

But, perhaps, Christ is speaking only of the personal relation of each man to the courts, and does not deny the courts of justice themselves, and in Christian society recognizes men who judge others in established institutions? But I see that this, too, cannot be conceded. Christ commands in his prayer all people without exception to forgive others, that their guilt be also forgiven them, and he repeats this thought several times. Consequently, every man must forgive all, both in his prayer and before he offers a gift. How, then, can a man judge and sentence in court, since, according to the faith which he professes, he must always forgive? And so I see that, according to Christ's teaching, there cannot be such a person as a Christian judge, who punishes men.

But, perhaps, from the connection in which the words stand with other words, Judge not and condemn not, Christ, speaking here, Judge not, did not have in mind human courts? But that is not true, either; on the contrary, it is evident from the context that, saying, Judge not, Christ is speaking of courts as institutions; according to Matthew and Luke, he precedes the words, Judge not, by, Do not resist evil, suffer evil, do good to all men. And before this he, according to Matthew, repeats the words of the Jewish criminal law, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And after this reference to the criminal law, he says, But do not do so, do not resist evil, and then only, he says, Do not judge. Consequently Christ is speaking of the criminal law of men, and rejects it with the words. Do not judge.

Besides, according to Luke, he not only says, Do not judge, but, Do not judge and do not condemn. There must be some reason why this word, which has nearly the same meaning, is added. The addition of this word can have but one aim: the explanation of the meaning in which this first word is to be taken.

If he wanted to say, Do not condemn your neighbour, he would have added this word; but he adds a word, which means, Do not sentence. And then he says, And you will not be sentenced; forgive all, and you will be forgiven.

But, perhaps, Christ was still not thinking of the courts, when he said this, and I put my own thought into his words, which have a different significance.

I look to find out how the first disciples of Christ, the apostles, considered the human courts, and whether they recognized and approved them. In Chapter IV., Verses 1–11, Apostle James says, Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

The word which is rendered by *speak evil* is *καταλάλεα.* Even without referring to the dictionary, we can see that it must mean *to accuse:* and this it does mean, which any one may verify by looking into the dictionary. It is translated, He that speaketh evil of his brother, speaketh evil of the law. Involuntarily the question arises, Why? No matter how much evil I may speak of my brother, I do not speak evil of the law; but if I accuse and judge my brother in court, it is evident that I thus accuse Christ's law, that is, I consider Christ's law insufficient, and accuse and judge the law. Then it is clear that I no longer execute his law, but am myself a judge. But a judge, says Christ, is he who can save. How, then, can I be a judge, and punish, since I am not able to save?

This whole passage speaks of the human court, and denies it. The whole epistle is permeated by the same idea. In the same epistle (ii. 1–13), it says:

1. My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

5. Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

6. But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?

8. If ye fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Lev. xix. 18), ye do well:

9. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. (Deut. xxii. 22; Lev. xviii. 17–25.)

12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

The last words have frequently been translated by, Mercy is proclaimed at the judgment, so as to mean that there can be a Christian court, but that it must be merciful.

James admonishes the brethren not to make any distinction between men. If you do make a distinction, you *διεκρίθητε* you are partial, as judges with evil thoughts are in the court. You have decided that the poor man is worse, whereas, in reality, the rich man is worse. He oppresses you and drags you to court. If you live according to the law of love for your neighbour, according to the law of mercy (which, in distinction from the other, James calls royal), it is well. But if you respect persons, make distinctions among men, you become transgressors of the law of mercy. And, having in view, no doubt, the example of the harlot, who was brought before Christ, in order that she might be stoned to death according to the law, or in general the crime of adultery, James says that he who puts to death the harlot will be guilty of murder, and will break the eternal law, for the same eternal law forbids both fornication and murder. He says, Do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty, for there will be no mercy to him who is without mercy, and so mercy destroys the court.

How could this be said more clearly and more definitely ? Every distinction between men, every judgment as to this man being good, and that one bad, is prohibited ; the human court is pointed out as being unquestionably bad, and it is shown that this judgment is criminal, in that it puts to death for crimes, and that, therefore, the courts are naturally destroyed by God's law, — by mercy.

I read the epistles of Apostle Paul, who suffered from the courts, and in the very first chapter of his epistle to the Romans I read an admonition, which the apostle makes to the Romans for all their vices and delusions, and among these for their courts :

I. 32. Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

II. 1. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest : for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself ; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them

which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Apostle Paul says, Knowing the righteous judgment of God, they themselves act unrighteously and teach others to do likewise, and so a man who judges cannot be justified.

Such a relation to the courts I find in the epistles of the apostles; but in their lives, as we all know, the human courts appeared to them as an evil and offence, which it was necessary to bear with firmness and with devotion to the will of God.

If we reconstruct in our imagination the condition of the first Christians amidst the Gentiles, we shall easily understand that it could not have occurred to the Christians, who were persecuted by human courts, to forbid the courts. Only occasionally they could touch on this evil, denying its foundations, even as they did.

I consult the teachers of the church of the first centuries, and I see that they always defined their doctrine, as distinguishing them from all the others, by saying that they never compel others or judge any one (Athenagoras, Origen), nor put to death, but only endure the torments which are imposed upon them by human courts. All the martyrs attested the same by their acts. I see that all Christianity, up to Constantine, never looked differently at the courts than as at an evil which one must patiently endure, and that it never could have occurred to a single Christian of that time that a Christian could take part in a judgment.

I see that Christ's words, Do not judge, and do not condemn, were understood by his first disciples just as I have come to understand them, in their direct sense, Do not judge in courts, and do not take part in them.

Everything incontestably confirmed my conviction that the words, Do not judge, and do not condemn, meant, Do not judge in courts; but the interpretation that it means, Do not calumniate thy neighbour, is so universally accepted, and the courts flourish so boldly and so arrogantly in all Christian countries, basing themselves even on the church, that I for a long time doubted the justice of my comprehension. If all men could interpret in such a way and have established Christian courts, they, no doubt, must have had some foundation for them, and there is something about it which you do not understand, I said to myself. There must be some grounds on which these words are meant to mean calumny, and there must be grounds on which Christian courts are established.

I turned to the interpretations of the church. In all these commentaries, beginning with the fifth century, I found that these words were usually understood to mean a verbal condemnation of one's neighbour, that is, calumny. And since these words are accepted to mean a verbal condemnation of one's neighbour, there arises a difficulty: how can we help condemning? The evil cannot help but be condemned. And so all the interpretations turn about what one may condemn, and what not. They say that for the servants of the church that cannot be taken as a prohibition against judging, and that the apostles themselves judged (Chrysostom and Theophilactes). They say that, in all probability, Christ by these words points to the Jews, who accuse their neighbours of small sins, and themselves commit great sins. But nowhere is there a word said about the human institutions, the courts, about the relation that these courts bear to the prohibition against condemning. Does Christ forbid them, or does he permit them?

To this natural question there is no answer, as though it were too obvious that the moment a Christian sits down in the judgment-seat, he can not only condemn his neighbour, but also put him to death.

I consult the Greek, Catholic, and Protestant writers and the writers of the Tübingen school and of the historical school. By all these, even the most freethinking interpreters, the words are understood as a prohibition against calumniating. But why these words, contrary to the whole teaching of Christ, are understood in such a narrow sense that into the prohibition against judging there does not enter the prohibition against keeping court; why it is assumed that Christ, in prohibiting the condemnation of one's neighbour which, as a bad deed, accidentally escapes one's mouth, does not consider bad the same kind of a condemnation which is pronounced consciously and is combined with the exertion of violence over the condemned person, — to this there is no answer; and there is not even the slightest hint as to the possibility of understanding by condemnation what takes place in courts and causes millions to suffer. More than that: on the occasion of the words, Do not judge and do not condemn, this same cruel method of legal condemnation is cautiously obviated and even fenced off. The theological commentators mention that courts must exist in Christian countries, and that they are not contrary to Christ's law.

When I noticed this, I doubted the sincerity of these interpretations, and turned to the translation of the words, Judge and condemn, — to that which I ought to have turned to in the start.

In the original these words are *κρίνω* and *καταδικάζω*. The incorrect translation of the word *καταδικάζω* in James's epistle, which is translated by the word *calumniate*, confirmed my doubt in the correctness of the translation.

I investigate how the words *κρίνω* and *καταδικάζω* are translated in the gospels in the different languages, and I find that in the Vulgate the last is translated by *condamnare,* and similarly in French; in Slavic it is *osuzhdat'*; in Luther, *verdammen,* to curse.

The variability of these translations increases my doubts, and I ask myself, What do the Greek word *κρίνω,* which is used in both the gospels, and the word *καταδικάζω,* which is used in Luke, mean, and what can they mean, especially in the case of Luke, an evangelist who, in the opinion of scholars, wrote in fairly good Greek? How would a man translate these words, if he knew nothing of the gospel teaching and its interpretations, and had before him this one utterance?

I consult the general dictionary, and I find that *κρίνω* has many different meanings, and among them the very usual significance, *to pass sentence,* even *to put to death,* but never *to calumniate.* I consult the dictionary of the New Testament, and I find that in the New Testament it is frequently used in the sense of *to put aside,* but never as *to calumniate.* And so I see that the word *κρίνω* may be differently translated, but that a translation which would give it the meaning of *to calumniate* is most far-fetched and unexpected.

I investigate the word *καταδικάζω,* which is attached to the word *κρίνω,* which has many meanings, apparently in order to define the special meaning which the author had in view with the first word. I look up the word *καταδικάζω* in the general dictionary, and I find that this word never has any other meaning than *to condemn at a trial to punishments, to sentence.* I consult the dictionary of the New Testament, and I find that this word is used in the epistle of James, v. 6, where it says, Ye have condemned and killed the just. The word *condemned,* the same *καταδικάζω,* is used in relation to Christ, who is condemned to death. In no other sense is this word ever used in the whole New Testament, or in any Greek language.

What is this? Have I grown so stupid? I, and every one of us, who lives in our society, if he has at all thought of the fate of men, has been terrified before the sufferings and before the evil which the criminal laws of men have introduced into life, — an evil both for the judged and for the judges, — from the executions of Dzhingis-Khan and of the Revolution to the executions of our own day.

No man with a heart has escaped that impression of terror and of doubt in the good, even at the recital, not to speak of the sight, of the executions of men by just such men, by means of rods, the guillotine, the gallows.

In the Gospel, each word of which we consider sacred, it says clearly and outright, You had a criminal code — a tooth for a tooth — and I give you a new one: do not resist evil; you must all keep this commandment, Do not return evil for evil, but always do good to all men, — forgive all men.

And further, it says, Do not judge. And, that no doubt be left as to the meaning of the words which were said, it adds, Do not condemn by trial to punishments.

My heart says clearly and distinctly, Do not put to death; science says, Do not put to death; the more you put to death, the more evil there is; reason says, Do not put to death; you cannot stop an evil with an evil. The Word of God, in which I believe, says the same. And I, reading all the teaching, reading the words, Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven, acknowledge that these are the words of God, and say that what they mean is that we must not busy ourselves with gossiping and calumniating, and must continue to regard the courts as a Christian institution, and me as a judge and Christian.

I was horrified at the grossness of the deception in which I had been living.

IV.

I NOW understood what Christ meant when he said, You were told an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; and I tell you, Do not resist evil, and endure it. Christ says, You have been impressed with the idea, and you have become accustomed to it, that it is good and rational by force to repel the evil and to pluck an eye out for an eye, to establish criminal courts, the police, the army, to resist the enemy: but I say, Use no violence, do not take part in violence, do no evil to any one, even to those whom you call your enemies.

I now understood not only that in the proposition about non-resistance to evil Christ was telling what would immediately result for each man from non-resistance to evil, but that — in contradistinction to the principle by which humanity lived in his day according to Moses and the Roman law, and now lives according to all kinds of codes — he put the proposition of non-resistance to evil in such a way that, according to his teaching, it was to be the foundation of the joint life of men and was to free humanity from the evil which it inflicted upon itself. He says, You think that your laws mend the evil, but they only increase it. There is one way of cutting off evil, and that is, to do good for evil to all without any distinction. You have tried your principle for a thousand years, try now the reverse.

Here is a remarkable thing. Of late I have frequently had occasion to speak with a large variety of men about this law of Christ concerning non-resistance to evil. Though rarely, I have now and then met people who agreed with me: but there are two classes of men who never, not even in principle, admit the direct comprehension of this law and who warmly defend the justice of resistance to evil. These men belong to the two extreme poles: they are the patriotic and conservative Christians, who acknowledge that their church is the true one, and the atheistic Revolutionists. Neither the one nor the other will renounce the right of forcibly resisting what they regard as an evil. Not even the wisest and most learned among them want to see the simple, obvious truth that, if we concede to one man the right forcibly to resist what he considers an evil, a second person may with the same right resist what he regards as an evil.

Lately I had in my hands an instructive correspondence of an Orthodox Slavophile with a Christian Revolutionist. One of them defended the violence of war in the name of the oppressed Slavic brothers, and the other defended the revolutions in the name of his oppressed brothers, the Russian peasants. Both demand violence, and both fall back on Christ's teaching.

They all understand Christ's teaching in the most varied manner possible, only not in the direct, simple sense which inevitably flows from his words.

We have established all our life on the very foundations which he denies, do not wish to understand his teaching in its simple and direct sense, and assure ourselves and others, either that we profess his teaching, or that his teaching is not good for us. The so-called believers believe that Christ is God, the second person of the Trinity, who came down upon earth in order to give men an example of life, and they do the most complicated things, which are necessary for the performance of the sacraments, the building of churches, the despatch of missionaries, the establishment of pastors, the government of the congregation, the confession of faith, but forget one small circumstance, — to do what he said.

The unbelievers try to arrange their life in every manner possible, except by Christ's law, having decided in advance that this law is not good for them. No one wants to endeavour to do what he says but, moreover, before attempting to do so, both believers and unbelievers decide in advance that this is impossible.

He says simply and clearly, The law of resisting evil with violence, which you have put at the basis of your life, is false and unnatural; and he gives us another basis, that of non-resistance, which alone according to his teaching, can free humanity from evil. He says, You think that your laws of violence mend the evil; but they only increase it. You have tried for thousands of years to destroy evil by evil, and you have not destroyed it, but have only increased it. Do what I tell you and what I do, and you will see whether it is true.

And he not only speaks of this, but in his whole life and in his death executes his teaching about non-resistance to evil.

The believers hear all this and read it in the churches, calling it divine words, and call him God, but they say, All this is very nice, but it is impossible with our social structure, — it disorganizes our whole life, whereas we are used to our life and love it. And so we believe in all this in the sense of its being an ideal toward which humanity must strive, an ideal which is attained by prayer and faith in the sacraments, in the redemption, and in the resurrection from the dead.

But the others, the unbelievers, the free interpreters of Christ's teaching, the historians of the religions, Strauss, Renan, and others, who have adopted in full the church interpretation as to Christ's teaching not having any direct applicability to life, and being only a visionary teaching which consoles half-witted people, say in a most serious manner that Christ's teaching was good enough to be preached to the savage inhabitants of the backwoods of

Galilee, but that to us, with our culture, it presents itself only as a sweet dream "*du charmant docteur*," as Renan says. According to their opinion, Christ could not rise to the height of comprehending the whole wisdom of our civilization and culture. If he had stood on the same height of education, on which these learned men stand, he would not have mentioned such sweet trifles, as the birds of heaven, the turning of the other cheek, and the care for the present day alone.

These learned historians judge of Christianity from the Christianity which they see in our society; but according to the Christianity of our society and time, our life with all its arrangement is regarded as true and holy, — with its prisons, solitary confinement, Alcazars, factories, periodicals, brothels, and parliaments, and only so much is taken out of Christ's teaching as does not interfere with this life. And since Christ's teaching rejects this whole life, nothing is taken out of Christ's teaching but words. The learned historians see this, and, as they have no need of concealing it, as the so-called believers do, subject this teaching of Christ, after it is bereft of its meaning, to a profound criticism, and reject it in its entirety, and prove that there never was anything in Christianity but visionary ideas.

One would think that, before passing judgment on Christ's teaching, it would be necessary to understand wherein this teaching consists; and, in order to decide whether this teaching is sensible or not, that it would be necessary, above all, to ascertain that he said what he said; but this we, neither the clerical, nor the freethinking interpreters, have done, and we know why we have not done it.

We know very well that Christ's teaching, rejecting them, has always embraced those human delusions, those *thohus*, empty idols, which we, calling them the church, the state, civilization, science, art, culture, imagine we can segregate from the series of delusions; but Christ speaks against them, without segregating any *thohus.*

Not only Christ, but all the Jewish prophets, John the Baptist, all the true sages of the world, speak of precisely this church, this state, this culture, this civilization, calling them evil and destruction of men.

Let us say a builder says to a householder, Your house is bad, it has to be rebuilt; and then he will proceed to explain in detail what beams are needed, how they are to be cut, and where to be placed. The householder will overhear the statement that the house is bad and needs to be rebuilt, and will with feigned respect listen to the builder's words about the further arrangement and distribution of the house. Apparently all the counsels of the builder will seem inapplicable, and he who pays no attention to the builder will simply call them foolish. Precisely the same takes place in regard to Christ's teaching.

Being unable to find a better comparison, I used this one; and I recalled that Christ, in imparting his teaching, made use of this very comparison. He said, I will destroy your temple, and in three days will I build up a new one. And for this he was crucified; and for the same thing they now crucify his teaching.

The least that can be demanded of men who are judging of a person's teachings is that they should judge of the teacher's teaching, as he himself understood it. Now, he did not understand his teaching as a distant ideal of humanity, the execution of which is impossible, not as visionary, poetical fancies, with which he captivated the simple-minded inhabitants of Galilee, but as a deed which would save humanity. And he did not dream on the cross, but spoke loud, and died for his teaching, and in exactly the same manner many other men have died and will die. We cannot say of such a teaching that it is a dream.

Every teaching of the truth is a dream for those who have gone astray. We have reached such a point that there are many men (I was among their number) who say that this teaching is visionary because it is not in accord with human nature. It is not in accord with human nature, they say, to offer the other cheek, when a man is struck on one cheek, nor to give up one's property to a stranger, nor to work for another, and not for oneself. It is human nature, they say, to defend one's safety, the safety of one's family, one's property, in other words, it is in accord with human nature to struggle for existence. A learned jurist will prove in a scientific manner that it is man's most sacred duty to defend his rights, that is, to struggle.

But we need but for a moment to renounce the idea that the social structure, which exists and is made by men, is the best, the most sacred social structure, and the objection that Christ's teaching is not in accord with human nature is immediately turned against these who object. Who will deny that it is repulsive and painful to human nature, not only to torture or kill a man, but even to torture a dog, or to kill a chicken or a calf? (I know men living by agricultural labour, who have stopped eating meat only because they had themselves to kill their animals.) And yet the whole structure of our life is such that every personal good of man is gained by the sufferings of other men, which are contrary to human nature. The whole structure of our life, the whole complicated mechanism of our institutions, which have violence for their aim, testify to this, that violence is exceedingly repulsive to human nature.

Not one judge would have the courage to strangle the man whom he has sentenced according to his law. Not one chief would have the courage to take a peasant away from a weeping family and lock him up in prison. Not one general or soldier would, without discipline, oath, or war, kill a hundred Turks or Germans, and lay waste their villages; he would not even have the courage to wound a single man. All this is done only thanks to that complicated political and social machine, whose problem it is so to scatter the responsibility of the atrocities which are perpetrated so that no man may feel the unnaturalness of these acts. Some write laws; others apply them; others again muster men, educating in them the habit of discipline, that is, of senseless and irresponsible obedience; others again — these same mustered men — commit every kind of violence, even killing men, without knowing why and for what purpose. But a man need but a moment mentally free himself from this net of the social structure, in which he is caught, and he will know what is not in accord with his nature.

If we will not affirm that the habitual evil, which we practise, is an unchangeable, divine truth, it will be clear to us what is natural and proper for man, — whether it is violence, or Christ's law; whether to know that my peace and security and that of my family, all my joys and pleasures, are bought by the poverty, debauch, and suffering of millions, — by annual gallows, hundreds of thousands of suffering prisoners and millions of soldiers, policemen, and guards, torn away from their families and dulled by discipline, who with loaded pistols, to be aimed at hungry men, secure the amusements for me; whether to buy every dainty piece which I put into my mouth, or into the mouths of my children, at the cost of all that suffering of humanity, which is inevitable for the acquisition of these pieces; or to know that any piece is only then my piece when nobody needs it, and nobody suffers for it.

We need only to understand that it is so, that every joy of mine, every minute of peace, is in our structure of life bought at the cost of the privations and sufferings of thousands who are restrained by violence; we need but understand this, in order that we may comprehend what is proper for a man's whole nature, that is, not only for his animal, but both for his rational and his animal nature; we need only understand Christ's law in all its significance, with all its consequences, in order that we may understand that Christ's teaching is in accord with human nature, that it consists even in this, that we reject the visionary teaching of men about resisting evil, which is not in accord with human nature, and which makes their life miserable.

Christ's teaching about non-resistance to evil is a dream! And this, that the life of men, into whose souls pity and love for one another is put, has passed, for some, in providing stakes, knouts, racks, cat-o'-nine-tails, tearing of nostrils, inquisitions, fetters, hard labour, gallows, executions by shooting, solitary confinements, prisons for women and children, in providing slaughter of tens of thousands in war, in providing revolutions and seditions; and for others, in executing all these horrors; and for others again, in avoiding all these sufferings and retaliating for them, — such a life is not a dream!

We need only understand Christ's teaching, in order that we may comprehend that the world, not the one which was given by God for man's joy, but the one which is established by men for their destruction, is a dream, the wildest, most terrible dream, the delirium of an insane man, from which we need only once awaken, in order that we may never again return to this terrible vision.

God came down upon earth; the Son of God, one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, became incarnate and redeemed Adam's sin; this God, so we have been taught to believe, must have said something mysterious and mystical, something which it is hard to understand, which can be understood only by means of faith and grace, and suddenly God's words are so simple, so clear, so rational. God says simply, Do not do evil to one another, and there will be no evil. Is it possible God's revelation is so simple? Is it possible this is all God said? It seems to us that we know all this, for it is so simple.

Elijah the prophet, running away from men, hid himself in a cave, and he had a revelation that God would appear to him at the entrance of the cave. There was a storm, and the trees were broken by it. Elijah thought that this was God, and he looked out, but God was not there. Then there came a rain-storm; the thunder and lightning were terrible. Elijah went out to see whether God was there, but he was not. Then there was an earthquake; fire rose from the earth, rocks were split, and mountains caved in. Elijah looked out, but God was not there. Then it quieted down, and a light breeze blew from the refreshed fields. Elijah looked out, and God was there. Even so are these simple words, Do not resist evil.

They are very simple, but in them is expressed the law of God and of man, the only and eternal law. This law is to such a degree eternal that, if there is in historical life a movement toward abolishing evil, it exists only thanks to those men who so understood Christ's teaching, and who endured the evil and did not resist it through violence. The movement of humanity toward the good takes place, not thanks to the tormentors, but to the tormented. As fire does not put out fire, so evil does not put out evil. Only the good meeting the evil, and not becoming contaminated by it, vanquishes the evil.

In the world of the human soul there is an immutable law, like the law of Galileo, only more immutable, more clear, and more full. Men may depart from it, concealing it from others, and still the progress of humanity toward the good can take place only on this path. Every step in advance has been made only in the name of non-resistance to evil. And a disciple of Christ may, with greater assurance than Galileo, affirm in view of all possible offences and menaces, And yet the evil has been destroyed not by violence, but by good. And if this progress is slow, it is so because the clearness, simplicity, rationality, inevitableness, and obligatoriness of Christ's teaching have been concealed from the majority of men in a most cunning and dangerous manner; they have been concealed under a false teaching which falsely calls itself his teaching.

V.

Everything confirmed the correctness of the meaning of Christ's teaching, as it was now revealed to me. For a long time I could not get accustomed to the strange idea that, after the eighteen hundred years that Christ's law had been professed by billions of people, and after the thousands of men who had devoted their lives to the study of this law, I should now have discovered this law as something new. However strange this was, it was so: Christ's teaching of non-resistance to evil arose before me as something entirely new, of which I did not have the least conception. And I asked myself, How could this have happened? I must have had some false idea of the meaning of Christ's teaching, since I was able so to misunderstand it. And there was a false idea.

When I approached the study of the Gospel, I was not in the position of a man who, having never before heard of Christ's teaching, suddenly heard of it for the first time. There was in me already a whole theory of how I must understand it. Christ did not present himself to me as a prophet, who reveals to me a divine law, but as a continuator and elucidator of God's familiar and unquestionable law. I already had a whole, definite, and very complicated teaching about God, the creation of the world and man, and his commandments, given to men through Moses.

In the gospels I came across the words, You have been told, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I tell you, Do not resist evil. The words, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, were Moses' commandment

The words, I say, Do not resist evil, were a new commandment, which rejected the first.

If I had looked straight at Christ's teaching, without that theological theory which I had imbibed with my mother's milk, I should have understood the simple meaning of Christ's words in a simple manner. I should have understood that Christ rejects the old law and gives a new law. But it had been impressed upon my mind that Christ does not reject Moses' law, but, on the contrary, confirms it down to the smallest point and tittle, and complements it. Verses 17 and 18 of Chap V. of Matthew, in which this is asserted, had always during my former readings startled me by their obscurity, and had provoked doubts. In so far as I then knew the Old Testament, especially the last books of Moses, in which those trifling, senseless, and often cruel rules are laid down, each time with the statement, And God said to Moses, — it seemed strange to me how Christ could have confirmed all this law, and unintelligible why he should have done so. But I then left the question, without trying to solve it. I took on trust the interpretation, with which I had been impressed since childhood, that both these laws were the productions of the Holy Ghost, that these laws were in agreement, and that Christ confirmed the law of Moses and fulfilled and complemented it.

How this complementing was done, how the contradictions were solved that are so startling in the Gospel itself, and in these verses, and in the words, But I say, I never accounted to myself clearly. But now, since I came to understand the simple and direct meaning of Christ's teaching, I comprehended that the two laws were contradictory, and that there could be no such a thing as a harmonization or complementing of one by the other, that it was necessary to accept one of the two, and that the interpretation of Matt. v. 17 and 18, which had startled me before on account of their obscurity, must be incorrect.

When I read these verses again, the verses which heretofore had seemed so obscure to me, I was struck by the simple and clear meaning which was suddenly revealed to me.

This meaning was revealed to me, not because I interpreted something into them, or transposed anything, but only because I rejected the artificial interpretation which has been attached to this passage.

Christ says (Matt. v. 17 and 18): Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

And Verse 20 adds, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

Christ says, I have not come to break the eternal law, for the fulfilment of which your books and prophecies have been written, but to teach you to fulfil the eternal law; I am not speaking of the law which the Pharisees, your teachers, call the law of God, but of the eternal law which is less subject to change than heaven and earth.

I express the same idea in other words for the purpose of taking the mind away from the habitual false interpretation. If it were not for this false comprehension, the idea could not be expressed more exactly and better than it is expressed in these verses.

The interpretation that Christ does not reject the law is based on this, that, thanks to the comparison with the jot of the written law, the meaning of written law has here without any foundation and contrary to the meaning been ascribed to the eternal law. But Christ is not speaking of the written law. If Christ were speaking in this passage of the written law, he would use the customary expression, The law and the prophets, which he always uses when he speaks of the written law; but he employs an entirely different expression, The law or the prophets. If Christ were speaking of the written law, he would in the next verse, which is the continuation of the thought, use the words, The law or the prophets, and not the word, The law, without any addition, as it stands in this verse. Moreover, Christ, according to the Gospel of Luke, uses the same expression in such a context that its meaning becomes indubitable.

In Luke xvi. 16, Christ, speaking to the Pharisees, who see righteousness in the written law, says, Ye justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And immediately after, in Verse 17, he says, It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

With the words, The law and the prophets until John, Christ nullifies the written law. With the words, It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail, he confirms the eternal law. In the first words, he says, The law and the prophets, that is, the written law; in the second he says simply, The Law, consequently he means the eternal law. Consequently it is clear that here the eternal law is opposed to the written law,[1] and that precisely the same distinction is made in Matthew, where the eternal law is defined by, The law or the prophets.

The history of the text of Verses 17 and 18 is remarkable from the variants. In the majority of texts we find only the word *law,* without the addition of *prophets.* With such a reading there can be no interpretation which would make it mean the written law. But in the other texts, in Tischendorf's and in the canonical, there is added *the prophets,* not with the conjunction *and,* but with *or,* — the law and the prophets, — which again excludes the meaning of the written law.

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[1] Moreover, as though on purpose that there should be no doubt as to what law he is talking about, he, in connection with this, immediately adduces an example, a most glaring example, of the rejection of the law of Moses by means of the eternal law, from which not one jot can be omitted; in quoting the most glaring contradiction to the law of Moses which there is in the Gospel, he says (Luke xvi. 18), Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery, — that is, in the written law divorce is permitted, but according to the eternal law it is a sin. — *Author's Note.*

But in certain texts, which are not accepted by the church, the word *prophets* is connected by *and,* and not by *or;* and in the same texts, where the word *law* is repeated, *and the prophets* is again added. Thus, with this change the whole utterance is made to mean that Christ is speaking only of the written law.

These variants give the history of the interpretations of this passage. The only clear meaning is, that Christ, as also according to Luke, is speaking of the eternal law; but among the number of the recorders of the gospels there are those who want to acknowledge the obligatoriness of the written law of Moses, and they add *and the prophets* to the word *law,* and change the meaning.

Other Christians, who do not recognize the books of Moses, either exclude the addition, or change the word *and,* *καί,* to *or,* *ἤ.* And with this *or* the passage gets into the canon. But, in spite of the clearness and obviousness of the text in the form in which it has entered the canon, the canonical commentators continue to interpret it in the spirit in which were made the changes that did not enter into the text. This passage has been subjected to innumerable interpretations, which depart the more from the direct meaning, the less the commentator agrees with the directest, simplest meaning of Christ's teaching, and the majority of the commentators retain the apocryphal meaning, the one which is rejected by the text.

To convince ourselves completely that in these verses Christ speaks only of the eternal law, we need only grasp the meaning of the word which has given rise to the false interpretations. In English law, in Greek *νόμος*, in Hebrew *thorah* has two chief meanings, one, that of law independently of its expression; and the other, the written expression of what certain men regard as the law. The distinction between these two meanings exists in all languages.

In Greek, in the epistles of Paul, this distinction is occasionally defined by the use of the article. Without the article Paul uses this word generally in the sense of the written law; with the article, in the sense of God's eternal law.

With the ancient Jews, in the prophets, in Isaiah, the word *law, thorah,* is always used in the sense of the eternal, only, unexpressed revelation, — God's injunction. The same word, *law, thorah,* is for the first time used by Ezdra, and later in the Talmud, in the sense of the written five books of Moses, over which the general title *Thorah* is written, just as we use the word *Bible,* but with this difference, that we have a word with which to distinguish between the Bible and God's law, while with the Jews the same word is used to express both ideas.

And so Christ, using the word *law, thorah,* employs it, now confirming it, like Isaiah and the other prophets, in the sense of God's law, which is eternal, now rejecting it, in the sense of the written law of the five books. But, to distinguish the two, whenever in rejecting it he employs the word in the sense of the written law, he always adds, *and the prophets,* or the word *your,* adding it to the word *law.*

When he says, Do not unto another what thou wouldst not should be done unto thee, — in this is the law and the prophets, he is speaking of the written law. He says that the whole written law can be reduced to one expression of the eternal law, and with these words he nullifies the written law.

When he says (Luke xvi. 16), The law and the prophets until John the Baptist, he is speaking of the written law, and with these words rejects its obligatoriness.

When he says (John vii. 19), Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law, or (John viii. 17), It is also written in your law, or (John xv. 25), That is written in their law, — he is speaking of the written law, of the law which he rejects, of that very law which condemns him to death. John xix. 7: The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die. It is evident that this law of the Jews, the one by which they put to death, was not the law which Christ taught. But when Christ says, I am not come to destroy the law, but to teach you to fulfil it, for nothing can be changed in the law, but everything must be fulfilled, — he is not speaking of the written law, but of the divine, eternal law, which he is confirming.

But let us assume that all these are formal proofs; let us assume that I have carefully picked out contexts and variants, and have carefully concealed everything which was against my interpretations; let us assume that the interpretations of the church are very clear and convincing, and that Christ really did not destroy the law of Moses, but left it in its full force. Let us assume that this is so. In that case what does Christ teach?

According to the interpretations of the church he taught that he, the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God the Father, came upon earth and with his death redeemed Adam's sin. But every person who has read the Gospel knows that in the gospels Christ either says nothing about this, or speaks in very doubtful terms. But let us assume that we do not know how to read, and that the gospels do speak of it. In any case, Christ's reference to his being the second person of the Trinity and redeeming the sins of humanity occupies a very small and obscure part of the Gospel. In what does the rest of Christ's teaching consist? It is impossible to deny, and all Christians have always recognized it, that the chief contents of Christ's teaching are the teaching about the life of men, — how men must live among themselves.

If we recognize that Christ taught a new manner of life, we must represent to ourselves certain definite men, among whom he taught.

Let us represent to ourselves Russians, or Englishmen, or Chinamen, or Hindoos, or even savages on some islands, and we shall see that every nation always has its own rules of life, its own law of life, and that, therefore, if a teacher teaches a new law of life, he by this very act destroys the former law; if he does not destroy it, he cannot teach. So it will be in England, in China, and with us. The teacher will inevitably destroy our laws, which we consider dear and almost sacred; but among us it may happen that the preacher, teaching us the new life, will destroy only our civil and political laws, our customs, but will not touch on the laws which we consider divine, though it is hard to suppose so. But among the Jewish nation, who had only one law, — all of it divine and embracing the whole life with all the minutest details, — what could a preacher preach among such a nation, having declared in advance that all the law of the nation to whom he was preaching was inviolable? But let us assume that this, too, is not a proof. Let those who interpret Christ's words as meaning that he confirmed the law of Moses explain to themselves whom Christ arraigned during his whole activity, against whom he rose, calling them Pharisees, lawyers, scribes.

Who are those who did not receive Christ's teaching and with their high priests crucified him? If Christ recognized the law of Moses, where were those real executors of the law, whose actions Christ would have approved of? Was there really not one?

We were told that the Pharisees were a sect. The

Jews do not say so. They say, The Pharisees are the true executors of the law. Let us assume that they are a sect. The Sadducees are a sect, too. Where, then, were the real men, those who were not the sect?

According to the Gospel of John they are all enemies of Christ and are directly called Jews. They do not agree with Christ's teaching and oppose him, only because they are Jews. But in the gospels it is not the Pharisees and Sadducees alone who are pointed out as the enemies of Christ; it is also the lawyers, those who guard the law of Moses, the scribes, those who read the law, the elders, who are always regarded as the representatives of the national wisdom.

Christ says, I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, to a change of life, *μετάνοια,* but the sinners. Where were those righteous? Who were they? Is it possible it was only Nicodemus? But even Nicodemus is represented to us as a good man gone astray. We are so accustomed to this, to say the least, strange interpretation that the Pharisees and some evil Jews crucified Christ that the simple question as to where the real Jews were, who were not Pharisees and not evil, and who kept the law, does not even occur to us. We need only put this question in order that all may become entirely clear. Christ — be he God or man — brought his teaching into the world amidst a people that kept the law, which determined the whole life of man and which was called God's law. What could Christ's relation to this law be?

Every prophet and teacher of faith, in revealing to men the law of God, always finds among men what they consider to be the law of God, and cannot escape the double use of the word *law,* which signifies what these men falsely call the law of God, *your law,* and what is the true, eternal law of God. Moreover, in addition to not being able to escape the double meaning of this word, the preacher frequently does not wish to escape it, and purposely combines the two conceptions, in order to point out that in the law, which the men profess whom he is converting, and which in its totality is false, there are eternal truths; and every preacher takes these laws, in so far as they are directed toward the truth, for the basis of his sermons. Christ does the same among the Jews, with whom both laws are called by the one name of *thorah.* In relation to Moses' law, and still more in relation to the prophets, especially Isaiah, whose words he quotes all the time, Jesus admits that in the Jewish law and in the prophets there are eternal, divine truths, which agree with the eternal law, and these, like the utterance, Love God and thy neighbour, he takes for the basis of his own teaching.

Christ several times expresses the same idea (Luke x. 26). He says, What is written in the law? How readest thou? — Even in the law it is possible to find an eternal truth, if you know how to read it. And he frequently points out that the commandment of their law about the love of God and of their neighbour is a commandment of the eternal law (Matt. xiii. 52). After all those parables with which he explains to his disciples the meaning of his teaching, at the end of everything, as referring to all that precedes, Christ says, Therefore every scribe, that is, educated man, who is taught the truth, is like a householder, who takes out of his treasure (together, indifferently) things new and old.

St. Irenæus, and with him the whole church, understands these words in the same way, but quite arbitrarily, and, violating the meaning of the discourse, ascribes to these words a meaning as though everything old were sacred. The clear significance is this, that he who needs the good takes not only the new things, but also the old, and that because it is old it cannot be rejected. Christ says with these words that he does not reject that which in the old law is eternal. But when they speak to him of the whole law or of its forms, he says that it is not possible to put new wine into old bottles. Christ cannot confirm the whole law, neither can he reject the whole law and the prophets, — the law, in which it says, Love thy neighbour as thyself, — and those prophets, in whose words he frequently utters his thoughts. And so, in place of this simple and clear comprehension of the simplest words, as they are said, and as they are confirmed by the whole teaching of Christ, there is substituted a hazy interpretation, which introduces a contradiction where it does not exist, and thus destroys the meaning of the teaching: it reduces the teaching to words, and reëstablishes in fact the teaching of Moses in all its savage cruelty.

According to all church interpretations, especially since the fifth century, Christ did not destroy the written law, but confirmed it. But how did he confirm it? How can the law of Christ be united with that of Moses? To this there is no answer. In all the commentaries they have a play on words, and say that Christ fulfilled the law of Moses in that in him were fulfilled the prophecies, and in that Christ through us, through men's faith in him, fulfilled the law. But the only essential question for every believer as to how we are to unite the two contradictory laws, which determine the life of men, remains without even an attempt at a solution. And the contradiction which exists between the verse in which it says that Christ does not destroy the law, and the verse in which it says, You have been told . . . but I say, — and between the whole spirit of Moses' teaching and that of Christ, remains in full force.

Let any man who is interested in this question himself consult the church interpretations of this passage, from John Chrysostom until our time. Only after reading these long interpretations will he be clearly convinced that an artificial contradiction has been introduced where it did not exist.

The impossible attempts at harmonizing what cannot be united show clearly that this harmonization is not an error of thought, but that it has a clear and definite purpose, — it is necessary, and it is even obvious why it is necessary.

This is what John Chrysostom says, in replying to those who reject the law of Moses (Commentary to the Gospel of Matthew, Vol. I. pp. 320 and 321):

"Investigating further the ancient law, in which we are commanded to pluck out an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, they retort, How can he who says this be good? What shall we say to this? This, that, on the contrary, it is the highest token of God's love of men. He did not establish this law that we might pluck out each other's eyes, but that, fearing lest we should suffer this evil from others, we might not commit this evil against them. Similarly, when he threatened the Ninevites with destruction, he did not wish to destroy them (for if he had wished to do so, he ought to have kept silent); he wished only to make them better through this threat, to leave his anger. Even so he determined a punishment for those who were so bold as to be ready to pluck out their neighbours' eyes, with this purpose in view that, if they should not refrain from their cruelty of their own free will, fear at least should restrain them from depriving their neighbours of their eyesight. If this were a cruelty, then the prohibition against murder and adultery would also be a cruelty. Only insane men, who have reached the last degree of madness, can speak in this manner. But I to such a degree abhor calling these propositions cruel that I should regard the contrary as a lawless deed, as judged in the light of sound human reason. Thou sayest that God is cruel because he has commanded us to pluck an eye out for an eye; but I say that, if he had not given such a command, it would have been more correct for many to consider him such as thou callest him."

John Chrysostom openly recognizes the law, A tooth for a tooth, as being divine, and what is contrary to the law, A tooth for a tooth, that is, Christ's teaching about non-resistance to evil, as a lawless deed.

(Pp. 322 and 323): "Let us suppose that the whole law is destroyed," John Chrysostom continues, "and that no one fears the punishment determined by it, and that all sinful men are allowed fearlessly to live according to their inclinations, whether they be adulterers, murderers, thieves, or perjurers: will then not everything be perverted? and will not the cities, the market-places, the houses, the land, the sea, and the whole universe be filled with innumerable misdeeds and murders? This is obvious to all men. If with the existing laws, with the terror and the threats, the evil intentions are with difficulty restrained, what would prevent men from deciding on evil deeds, if this barrier were removed? What calamities would then encroach upon human life! It is cruel, not only to permit evil men to do what they please, but also to allow a man, who has done no wrong, to suffer, though he be innocent, without any redress. Tell me, — if a man, collecting evil men on all sides, and arming them with swords, ordered them to go through the city and kill all the people they met, — could there be anything more inhuman than that? On the contrary, if another man bound these armed men and locked them up by force in a prison, and snatched those who were threatened with death out of the hands of the lawless men, — could there be anything more humane than this?"

John Chrysostom does not say what this other man will be guided by in determining who is evil. What if he himself is evil and will put good men into prison?

"Now apply these examples to the law: he who commands us to pluck out an eye for an eye imposes this terror, as certain firm fetters, on the souls of the sinful, and is likened unto the man who bound those armed men: but he who should not have determined any punishment for the transgressors would arm them with fearlessness, and would be likened unto the man who distributed the swords to the malefactors and sent them through the city."

If John Chrysostom recognizes Christ's law, he ought to say, Who will pluck out the eyes and teeth, and put men into prison? If he who commands us to pluck out an eye for an eye, that is, God, plucked them out himself, there would be no contradiction here; but it is men who have to do this, whereas the Son of God told men that they must not do it. God said, Pull out the teeth; but the Son said, Do not pull them out. One or the other has to be accepted, and John Chrysostom, and with him the whole church, recognizes the command of God the Father, that is, of Moses, and rejects the command of the Son, that is, of Christ, whose teaching they claim to profess. Christ rejects the law of Moses, and gives his own.

For a man who believes Christ there is no contradiction. He pays no attention to the law of Moses, but believes in Christ's law, and fulfils it. For a man who believes in the law of Moses there is also no contradiction. The Jews recognize the words of Christ as void, and believe in the law of Moses. The contradiction appears only to those who want to live according to the law of Moses, and yet assure themselves and others that they believe in the law of Christ, — to those whom Christ calls hypocrites, a generation of vipers.

Instead of recognizing one or the other, the law of Moses or the law of Christ, they recognize both as divinely true.

But when the question touches the affairs of life itself, they reject outright the law of Christ and recognize the law of Moses.

If we try to grasp the meaning of this false interpretation, we find in it a terrible, frightful drama of the struggle of evil and darkness with good and light.

Among the Jewish people, entangled by numberless external rules, which are imposed upon them by the Levites in the shape of divine laws, before each of which it says, And God said to Moses, — there appears Christ. Not only man's relation to God, his sacrifices, feasts, fasts, but also man's relations to man, — the national, civil, domestic relations, all the details of his private life, — the circumcision, the cleansing of himself and of his vessels and garments, — all this is determined down to the minutest details, and everything is acknowledged to be a commandment of God, a law of God. Now, what could, I do not say Christ-God, but a prophet, the commonest teacher do, in teaching such people, if he did not destroy the law which had already determined everything down to the minutest details?

Like all other prophets, Christ takes out of what men call the law of God what is really the law of God, the foundations, rejects everything else, and with these foundations connects his revelation of the eternal law. There is no need of destroying everything; but the law which is regarded as equally binding in everything is inevitably destroyed. Christ does this, and he is accused of violating what is regarded as the law of God, and for this he is executed. But his teaching remains with his disciples, and passes into another circle and to the ages. But in the other circle similar strata, interpretations, and explanations grow up on this new teaching; again there is a substitution of base human inventions for the divine revelation; instead of, And God said to Moses, they say, It pleased us and the Holy Ghost. And again the letter covers the spirit. What is most striking is this, that Christ's teaching is connected with that whole *thorah*, in the sense of the written law, which he could not help but reject. This *thorah* is acknowledged to be a production of the revelation of his spirit of truth, that is of the Holy Ghost, and he is himself caught in the snare of his revelation, and the whole teaching is reduced to nothing.

So this is the reason why, after eighteen hundred years, there happened with me the strange thing that I had to discover the meaning of Christ's teaching, as something new.

I did not have to discover, but to do what all men have done, who seek God and his law, — to find what is the eternal law of God, amidst all that which men call by that name.

VI.

AND so, when I understood Christ's law as Christ's law, and not as that of Moses and of Christ, and understood that precept of the law which directly denied the law of Moses, — all the gospels, instead of the former obscurity, disconnectedness, contradictions, united for me into one inseparable whole, and amidst them was segregated the essence of the whole teaching, expressed in the simple, clear, and accessible five commandments of Christ (Matt. v. 21–48), of which I had not known anything heretofore.

All the gospels speak of Christ's commandments and of fulfilling them. All the theologians speak of Christ's commandments; but what these commandments were, I had not known before. It seemed to me that Christ's commandment consisted in loving God and our neighbour as ourselves. And I did not see that this could not be Christ's commandment, because it was a commandment of the ancients (Deut. and Lev.). The words (Matt. v. 19), Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, — I referred to the commandments of Moses; and it never occurred to me that Christ's new commandments were clearly and definitely expressed in Verses 21–48 of Chap. V. of Matthew. I did not see that where it says, You have been told, but I say unto you, there were expressed the new definite commandments of Christ, namely, according to the number of references to the old law (counting the two references to adultery as one), five new, clear, definite commandments of Christ.

The beatitudes and their number I had heard and seen mentioned and explained, when I was taught religion at school; but I had never heard of Christ's commandments. To my surprise, I had to discover them.

This is the way I discovered them. In Matthew (v. 21–26) it says: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment (Isaiah xx. 13); But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

When I understood the commandment about non-resistance to evil, it occurred to me that the verses about anger must have a similarly clear meaning, which is applicable to life, as the commandment about non-resistance to evil. The meaning which I formerly ascribed to these words was this, that every man must always avoid anger against men, must never use curses, and must live in peace with all men without exception; but in the text there was an expression which excluded this meaning. It says, Be not angry *without a cause*, so that no unconditional peace followed from this precept. This expression troubled me. To clear my doubts, I turned to the commentaries of the theologians; and, to my surprise, I found that the interpretations of the fathers were directed mainly to this, when anger is excusable, and when not. All the interpreters of the church, putting special emphasis on the expression *without a cause,* explain this passage to mean that one must not without a cause offend people, or use curses, but that anger is not always unjust, and in confirmation of this interpretation they adduce examples of anger in the apostles and the saints. I could not help acknowledging that the explanation that anger, according to their expression, was not forbidden by the word of God, though it was contrary to the whole meaning of the Gospel, was consistent, and had its foundation in the expression *without a cause,* which stands in Verse 22. This expression changed the meaning of the whole utterance.

Be not angry without a cause. Christ commands us to forgive all men, to forgive without end; he forgives himself, and forbids Peter's being angry with Malchus, when Peter defends his teacher who is being led to the place of the crucifixion, consequently not without a cause. And this same Christ says, instructing all men, Be not angry without a cause, and so permits people to be angry for a good cause. Christ preaches peace to all simple people, and suddenly, as though with a mental reservation, that this does not refer to all cases, as there are cases when one may be angry with a brother, he puts in the expression *without a cause.* In the commentaries it is explained that there is a seasonable anger; but who is the judge, I said, of when it is seasonable? I have never yet seen angry men who did not consider their anger seasonable. All consider their anger legitimate and useful. This expression destroyed the whole meaning of the verse; but it stood in Holy Scripture, and I could not throw it out. This expression was as though to the utterance, Love thy neighbour, there were added, Love thy good neighbour, or the neighbour whom thou likest.

The whole meaning of the passage was for me destroyed by the expression *without a cause.* Even so the verses about being reconciled to him who has anything against thee, before thou prayest, which without the expression *without a cause* would have a direct, obligatory meaning, also received a conditional meaning.

I imagined that Christ ought to forbid all anger, all ill-will, and that, in order that it should not exist, he commanded, Before bringing thy gift to the altar, that is, before getting into communion with God, thou must remember whether there is a man who is angry with thee. And if there is such a one, without a cause or with a cause, go and be reconciled to him, and then only bring thy offering or pray. Thus it seemed to me, but from the interpretations it turned out that this passage had to be taken in a conditional way.

All the interpretations explain that we must make peace with all men; but if this is impossible to do on account of the corruption of men, who are inimical toward thee, it is necessary for thee to be reconciled spiritually, in thought: and then the enmity of the others toward thee will not interfere with thy prayer.

Besides, the words, Whosoever shall say, Raca, and, Thou fool, are terribly guilty, always seemed strange and obscure to me. If this is meant as a prohibition against cursing, why are there chosen such weak, almost innocuous words? Then again, why is such a terrible threat hurled against those who forget themselves with such a weak word as Raca, that is, insignificant? All that was obscure.

I felt that there was here the same kind of a lack of comprehension as in the words, Do not judge; I felt that, as in the other interpretation, everything passed here from what was simple, important, definite, practicable into a hazy and indifferent sphere. I felt that Christ could not have comprehended the words, Go and be reconciled to him, as they interpret it, Be reconciled in thought. What is meant by, Be reconciled in thought? I thought that Christ was saying what he expressed in the words of the prophet, I do not want sacrifices, but compassion, that is, love for men. And so, if thou wantest to please God, remember who is angry with thee, before praying, in the morning and in the evening, at mass and at vigils; and go and arrange it in such a way that he may not be angry with thee, and then pray, if thou wantest.

But, in thought! I felt that the whole interpretation, which destroyed the direct and clear meaning, was based on the expression *without a cause.* If I could throw it out, the meaning would be clear; but all the interpretations were against my way of understanding it, and so was the canonical Gospel with its expression *without a cause.* If I departed from this, I could arbitrarily depart in another direction, and others could do the same. If it were not for this word, everything would be clear. And so I try philologically to explain this expression *without a cause*, so that it may not break the sense. I consult the general dictionary, and I see that this Greek word εἰκῇ means *without a plan, heedlessly;* I try to give it a significance which would not do violence to the sense, but evidently the word gives the meaning which is ascribed to it. I consult the New Testament dictionary, and I find the meaning which is given to it here. I investigate the context, and I find that the word is but once used in the Gospel, namely in this place. In the epistles it is used several times. In 1 Cor. xv. 2 it is used in precisely this sense. Consequently there is no possibility of explaining it otherwise, and I must assume that Christ said, Be not angry without a cause.

I must confess that assuming that Christ could in this passage have used such indistinct words, making it possible for us to understand them in such a way that nothing is left of them, was the same as renouncing the whole

Gospel. One last hope is left: I will try to find out whether this word is to be found in all the texts. I investigate the variants. I consult Griesbach, who gives all the variants, that is, in what texts and in what fathers a certain expression is used. I consult him, and am at once in raptures, for I find that there are variants to this passage. I look and I find that the variants all refer to the expression *without a cause.* The majority of the Gospel texts and quotations have not the expression *without a cause* at all. Consequently, the majority understood it in the same way as I understand it. I consult Tischendorf, and the word is wanting in the oldest text. I look into Luther's translation, from which I might have found it out in the shortest way, and the word is wanting there, too.

The very word which impaired the whole meaning of Christ's teaching is an interpolation of the fifth century, which has not entered into the best texts of the Gospel.

A man was found who put in this word, and other men were found who approved of this interpolation, and explained it.

Christ could not have said this terrible word, and he did not say it, and that first, simple, straight meaning of the whole passage, which startled me and which startles everybody, is the true one.

But more than this: It was enough for me to understand that Christ's words forbid being angry with anybody at any time, in order that the prohibition, which had troubled me before, of using the words *Raca* and *fool* should also receive a different meaning, and should not be a prohibition against using curses. The strange untranslated Hebrew word *Raca* gave me the new sense. *Raca* means *trampled down, destroyed, non-existing;* the word *raca* is very common, and means *exception, only not.* *Raca* means *a man who is not to be regarded as a man.* In the plural the word *rekim* is used in the Book of

Judges ix. 4, where it means *lost.* So it is this word that Christ does not permit us to use of any one.

Similarly he does not allow us to use the other word *fool,* like *raca,* which, as it were, would free us from our human obligations to our neighbour. We are angry and do evil to men, and, to justify ourselves, we say that he with whom we are angry is a lost or foolish man. And so it is these two words that Christ tells us not to use in respect to men and toward men. Christ tells us that we must not be angry with any one and justify our anger by considering another person lost or foolish.

And so, in place of the hazy, indefinite, and unimportant expressions, which were subject to interpretations and arbitrariness, there was disclosed to me, from Verse 21 to Verse 28, Christ's clear and definite first commandment: Live in peace with all men, and never consider thy anger against people just. Consider not a man lost or foolish, and do not call him so (Verse 22). Never consider thy anger as being with a cause, and never consider another man's anger against thee as without a cause; and so, if there is a man who is angry with thee, even though it be without a cause, go to him, before thy prayer, and destroy this hostile feeling (Verses 23 and 24). Try in advance to destroy the enmity between thee and other men, so that the enmity may not flame up and destroy thee (Verses 25 and 26).

Immediately after the first commandment the second, which begins with a reference to the ancient law, was disclosed to me with the same clearness. Matt. v. 27–32 says: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery (Ex. xx. 14–28): But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (Deut. xxiv. 1–32): But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of adultery, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

The meaning of these words presented itself to me as follows: a man must not even admit the idea that he can unite with another woman than the one with whom he has once been united, and he can never, as was the case according to the law of Moses, exchange this woman for another.

As in the first commandment against anger the advice is given that this anger should be put out in the beginning, an advice which is elucidated by the comparison with a man who is led to the judge, even so here Christ says that fornication is due to this, that women and men look upon one another as upon an object of lust. That this may not be, it is necessary to remove everything which can provoke lust, and to avoid all that which provokes lust, and, having united with the wife, under no condition to abandon her, because the abandonment of wives leads to debauch. The abandoned wives tempt other men and introduce debauch into the world.

The wisdom of this commandment startled me. All the evil between men, which arose from the sexual relations, was removed by it. Knowing that the enjoyment of the sexual relations leads to dissensions, men avoid everything which provokes lust, and, knowing that the law of man is to live in pairs, they unite in pairs, never under any condition violating this union, and all the evil of dissensions on account of the sexual relations is destroyed, in that there are no single men and no single women who are deprived of the marital life.

But the words which always startled me in the reading of the sermon on the mount, Saving for the cause of adultery, which are taken to mean that a man may be divorced from his wife in case of her adultery, now startled me more than ever.

Not to speak of the fact that there would be something unworthy in the form itself in which this thought was expressed, that side by side with what by their significance are the profoundest truths of the sermon, there should, like a note to an article of the code of laws, be this strange exception to the general rule, this exception itself contradicted the fundamental idea.

I consult the commentaries, and all (John Chrysostom, p. 365, and the others), even the learned theological critics, like Reuss, acknowledge that these words mean that Christ permits divorce in the case of the wife's adultery, and that in Chapter XIX., in Christ's discourse, which prohibits divorce, the words, Except it be for adultery, mean the same. I read and re-read Verse 32, and it seems to me that this cannot mean a permission to be divorced. To verify my opinion, I consult the contexts, and I find in Matt. xix., Mark x., Luke xvi., in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians the explanation of the same doctrine of the inseparableness of marriage, without any exception whatever.

In Luke xvi. 18 it says, Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

In Mark x. 4–12 it says, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

The same is said in Matt. xix. 4–9.

In Paul's epistle, 1 Cor. vii. 1–12, the idea of preventing debauch is developed in detail. It says there that husband and wife, having once been united, should not put one another away, and should satisfy one another in the sexual relation; and just as directly does it say that one of the married pair can under no condition put away the other for the purpose of having relations with a third party.

According to Mark, Luke, and Paul's epistle divorce is not permitted. From the sense of the interpretation that husband and wife are one body united by God, an interpretation which is repeated in two gospels, it follows that divorce is not permitted. From the meaning of the whole teaching of Christ, who enjoined men to forgive all, not excluding even the fallen wife, it follows that divorce is not permitted. From the sense of the whole passage, which explains that the putting away of the wife, especially one of loose morals, leads to debauch, it follows that divorce is not permitted.

On what, then, is the interpretation based that divorce is permitted in the case of the wife's adultery? On those words of Verse 32 of Chapter V., which startled me so much. These words are interpreted by all to mean that Christ permits divorce in the case of the wife's adultery, and these very words are repeated in Chapter XIX. by many texts of the gospels and by many fathers instead of the words, Except it be for adultery.

I began once more to read these words, but for a long time could not understand them. I saw that there must be some error of translation and interpretation here, but I was unable for a long time to discover where it was. The error was obvious. In opposing his commandment to that of Moses, according to which any man, as it says there, hating his wife, could put her away, and give her a writing of divorcement, Christ says, I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of adultery, causeth her to commit adultery. In these words there is nothing which is opposed, and there is not even any definition whether it is allowable to be divorced, or not. All it says is, that the putting away of the wife causes her to commit adultery.

Suddenly an exception is made here in the case of the wife who is guilty of adultery. This exception, which has reference to the woman guilty of adultery, when the husband is under discussion, is in general strange and unexpected, and in this place simply stupid, because it destroys even that doubtful sense which there was in these words. It says that the putting away of the wife causes her to commit adultery, and then it permits the putting away of a wife who is guilty of adultery, as though a wife who is guilty of adultery will not commit adultery.

But more than this: When I analyzed this passage more attentively, I saw that it had even no grammatical sense. It says: Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of adultery, causeth her to commit adultery; and the sentence is ended. It speaks of the husband, saying that in putting away his wife he causes her to commit adultery. What has *saving for the cause of adultery* to do with it? If it said that the husband who puts away his wife, except for her adultery, commits adultery, the sentence would be correct. But as it is, for the subject *husband,* who is getting divorced, there is no other predicate than *causeth.* How can we refer *saving for the cause of adultery* to this predicate? You cannot cause, saving for the cause of adultery of the wife. Even if to the words, Saving for the cause of adultery, there were added the words *of the wife,* or *her,* which are not added, these words could not be referred to the predicate *causeth.* These words, according to the accepted interpretation, refer to the predicate; the main predicate is *causeth.* What, then, has *saving for the cause of adultery* to do here? Whether with the cause of adultery, or without it, the husband, in putting her away, causeth her to commit adultery. This is an expression like the following: he who deprives his son of sustenance, saving for the cause of cruelty, causes him to be cruel. This expression can obviously not have the meaning that the father can deprive his son of sustenance, if the son is cruel. If it makes any sense at all, it means this, that the father, depriving his son of sustenance, in addition to his own guilt of cruelty, causes also his son to be cruel. Even so the evangelical expression would have sense if, instead of the words, Saving for the cause of adultery, we had, For the cause of lechery, debauchery, or something similar, which does not express an act, but a property.

And I asked myself, Does it not say here simply that in getting a divorce a man, in addition to being himself guilty of adultery (for a man gets a divorce in order that he may marry another woman), causes his wife also to commit adultery? If the word adultery in the text could be rendered by such words as to give it the meaning of debauch, the meaning would be clear.

And there was repeated what had so frequently happened to me. The text confirmed my supposition, so that there could not even be any doubt.

The first thing that startled me in reading the text was this, that the word *πορνεία,* which is translated by the same word *adultery,* just like the word *μοιχᾶσθαι,* is in reality an entirely different word. But, perhaps, these words are synonyms, or in the gospels one word may be used for the other. I consult all the dictionaries, the general and the New Testament dictionaries, and I see that the word *πορνεία*, which corresponds to the Hebrew זנות, the Latin *fornicatio* [as which it is given in the King James Bible], the German *Hurerei*, the Russian *rasputstvo*, has a most definite meaning, and has never, in any dictionary, meant, and could not mean, the act of adultery, *adultère, Ehebruch*, as which it is translated. It means a vicious condition or property, but not an act, and cannot be translated by *adultery*. More than this: I see that the word, *adultery, to commit adultery*, is everywhere in the gospels and even in these verses designated by another word, *μοιχάω*. All I had to do was to correct this obviously intentional mistranslation in order that the meaning ascribed by the commentators to this passage and to the context of Chap. XIX. should become entirely impossible, and that the meaning which makes the word *πορνεία* refer to the husband should become indubitable.

The translation which any man who knows Greek would make would be the following: *παρεκτός* besides, *λόγου* the guilt, *πορνείας* of fornication, *ποιεῖ* causes, *αὐτήν* her, *μοιχᾶσθαι* to commit adultery, and get word for word, He who gets divorced from his wife, besides the guilt of fornication, causes her to commit adultery.

The same sense is got from Chap. XIX. We need only correct the wrong translation of both the word *πορνεία* and the preposition *ἐπί*, which is translated by *for*, and instead of *adultery* put the word *fornication*, and instead of *for* put *for the sake of*, and it becomes clear that the words *εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ* cannot refer to the wife. Thus the words *παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας* can mean nothing but *besides the guilt of the husband's fornication*, just as the words *εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ*, which are given in Chap. XIX., cannot refer to anything but the husband's fornication.

It says, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ, word for word, *If not for the sake of fornication*, and not *for fornication.* The sense we get is, that Christ, replying in this place to the thought of the Pharisees, who imagined that a man did not commit adultery if he left his wife, not in order to fornicate, but to live in wedlock with another woman, says that it is none the less adultery. Thus we get a simple meaning, which is in accord with the whole teaching, with the words with which it is connected, and with grammar and logic.

This simple, clear meaning, which results from the words themselves and from the whole teaching, I had to discover after the greatest labour. Indeed, read these words in German, in French, where it says directly *pour cause d'infidélité*, or *à moins que cela ne soit pour cause d'infidélité*, and guess that it means something entirely different. The word παρεκτός, which according to all the dictionaries means *excepte, ausgenommen, except*, is translated by a whole clause, *à moins que cela ne soit.* The word πορνεία is translated *infidélité, Ehebruch, adultery* [but *fornication* in the King James Bible]. And on this intentional distortion of the text they base the interpretation which violates the moral, and religious, and grammatical, and logical sense of Christ's words.

Again there was confirmed for me that terrible and joyous truth that the meaning of Christ's teaching is simple and clear, that its precepts are important and determined, but that its interpretations, which are based on the desire to justify the existing evil, have so obscured it that it can be discovered only with an effort. It became clear to me that if the gospels were discovered half burned or effaced, it would be easier to reconstruct their meaning than is the case at present, when they have been touched by the unscrupulous interpretations, whose direct purpose it is to pervert and conceal the meaning of the teaching. In this case it is even more obvious than in the former how the special purpose of justifying the divorce of some John the Terrible served as a pretext for obscuring the whole doctrine of marriage.

We need only reject the interpretations, and, instead of what is hazy and indefinite, we get the definite and clear second commandment of Christ.

Make no sport of the lust of sexual relations; every man who is not a eunuch, that is, who is in need of sexual relations, should have a wife, and let a man have one wife, and a woman have one husband, and under no consideration violate the sexual union between yourselves.

Immediately after the second commandment we have again a reference to the ancient law, and the third commandment is expounded. Matt. v. 33–37: Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths (Lev. xix. 12; Deut. xxiii. 21): But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black; But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

This passage used to trouble me very much with my former readings. It troubled me, not by its obscurity, as in the case of the passage on the divorce, not by its contradictions with other passages, like the permission for anger not without cause, not by the difficulty of execution, like the passage about turning the other cheek: it troubled me, on the contrary, by its clearness, simplicity, and ease. By the side of the rules, whose depth and significance frightened and affected me, there suddenly stood such a useless, frivolous, easy rule, which was of no consequence, either for me or for others. I never swore by Jerusalem, or by God, or by anything else, even before this, and that never gave me any trouble. Besides, it seemed to me that, whether I should swear or not, that could be of no importance. Wishing to find an explanation of this rule, which troubled me by its ease, I turned to the commentaries. In this case the commentators helped me. All the commentators see in these words a confirmation of the third commandment of Moses, which is, that we should not swear by anything divine. They explain these words by saying that Christ, like Moses, forbids us to use the name of God in vain. In addition to this, the commentators explain that this rule of Christ about not swearing is not always obligatory and in no way refers to that oath which every citizen swears to the powers that be. And they pick out texts of Holy Scripture, not in order to confirm the direct meaning of Christ's precept, but in order to prove that it is possible and necessary not to execute it.

They say that Christ himself confirmed the oath in court, when to the words of the high priest, I adjure thee by the living God, he replied, Thou hast said; they say that Paul the apostle invokes God to testify to the truth of his words, which is obviously the same oath; they say that oaths were prescribed by Moses' law, and that the Lord did not abolish them; they say that all that is abolished is the frivolous, Pharisaically hypocritical oaths.

When I comprehended the meaning and the aim of all these explanations, I saw that Christ's precept about the oath was not at all so insignificant, simple, and unimportant as it had seemed to me, when I had not included the political oath among the number prohibited by Christ.

I asked myself: Does it not say here that even that oath is forbidden which the church commentators have so cautiously excluded? Does not the prohibition cover the oath without which the division of men into countries is impossible, or the military cast? The soldiers, those men who commit all violence, call themselves "the oath." If I asked the grenadier how he solved the contradiction between the Gospel and the Military Regulation, he would tell me that he swore an oath, that is, swore on the Gospel. All the military men have given me such answers. This oath is just as necessary for the formation of that terrible evil which produces violence and war, so that in France, where Christianity is denied, they still stick to the oath.

Indeed, if Christ had not said so, he ought to have said so. He came to destroy the evil, and did not destroy the oath! What an enormous evil is still left in the world! Perhaps, they will say, this evil was not so great in the time of Christ. But that is not true; Epictetus, Seneca, had said that we must not swear to any one; this rule is also in the laws of Manu. How can I say that Christ did not see this evil, especially since he has said so openly, clearly, and in detail?

He said, Do not swear at all. This expression is as simple, clear, and indubitable as the words, Do not judge, and do not condemn, and is as little subject to misinterpretations, the more so since at the end it adds that everything which will be demanded of thee beyond Yes and No is from the principle of evil.

If Christ's teaching consists in doing the will of God, how can a man swear that he will do the will of man? The will of God may not coincide with the will of man. Christ says this very thing in this place. He says, Do not swear by thy head, for not only is thy head not thine, but every hair upon it is in the power of God. The same is said in the Epistle of James.

At the end of his epistle, as though in conclusion of all, Apostle James says (v. 12), But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

The apostle says distinctly why we should not swear: the oath does not seem criminal in itself, but from it men fall into condemnation, and so, Do not swear at all. How can that which has been said by Christ and by the apostle be expressed more clearly?

But I was so mixed up that I for a long time asked myself in surprise, Does it really mean what it does? For do we not all swear by the Gospel? It cannot be.

I had already read the commentaries, and I knew how the impossible was done.

What had happened in explaining the words, Do not judge, be not angry with any man, do not sever the union between man and wife, was the case here too. We have established our order of things, we love it and wish to consider it holy. There comes Christ, whom we consider to be God, and he says that this our order of things is not good. We call him God and do not wish to renounce our order of things. What shall we do? Where possible we will put in the expression without a cause, and reduce the rule about anger to nothing; where possible, we will, like the most unscrupulous evil judges, so misinterpret the meaning of the article of the law that the very opposite shall result: so that, instead of saying that you must not be divorced, it may say that you may; and where it is not possible to misinterpret, as in the case of the words, Do not judge and do not condemn, do not swear at all, let us boldly act contrary to the teaching, affirming that we are following it. Indeed, the chief obstacle toward the comprehension of the fact that the Gospel forbids every oath is this, that the pseudo-Christian teachers with extraordinary daring compel men to swear on the Gospel and by the Gospel, that is, compel them to do what is contrary to the Gospel.

How can it occur to a man, who is made to swear by the Gospel and the cross, that the cross is holy for the very reason that on it they crucified him who forbids us to swear, and that he who is pronouncing the oath is perhaps kissing as a holy thing that very place where it says clearly and definitely, Swear not at all.

But I was not longer troubled by this boldness. I saw clearly that in Verses 33–37 there was expressed the clear, definite, practicable third commandment, Never swear to any one about anything. Every oath is extorted by people for evil.

Immediately after this third commandment we find the fourth reference, and the fourth commandment is expounded. Matt. v. 38–42; Luke vi. 29, 30: Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

I have already said what definite, direct meeting these words have, and how we have no reason to explain them allegorically. The interpretations of these words, from John Chrysostom to our time, are truly wonderful. Everybody likes these words, and all of them utter profound reflections concerning them, except the one that these words have the meaning which they really have.

The church commentators, not in the least embarrassed by the authority of him whom they recognize as God, most calmly limit the meaning of his words. They say: "It is self-understood that all these commandments about enduring insults, about renouncing retaliation, being directed against the Jewish love of revenge, do not exclude the social measures for the limitation of evil and for the punishment of those who commit evil, not even the private, personal efforts and cares of each man concerning the inviolability of truth, the correction of offenders, the restraining of the evil-minded from doing harm; for else the spiritual laws of the Saviour would in Jewish fashion turn into a letter, which might serve for the success of evil and the suppression of virtue. The love of a Christian must be like the love of God, but the love of God limits and punishes evil in proportion as it remains more or less harmless for the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour; contrariwise, it is necessary to limit and punish evil, a duty which is especially imposed upon the authorities." (The Interpretation of the Gospel, by Archimandrite Mikhaíl, all based on the interpretation by the holy fathers.)

The learned and freethinking Christians are just as little embarrassed by the meaning of Christ's words, and correct him. They say that these are very exalted utterances, but devoid of every possibility of application to life, because the application of the rule of non-resistance to evil destroys all that order of things which we have arranged so well: so speak Renan, Strauss, and all the freethinking commentators.

But we need only bear ourselves toward the words of Christ as we bear ourselves toward the words of any man we meet, when he speaks to us, that is, assume that he means what he says, and the necessity of all profound reflections is at once removed. Christ says, I find that the method for making your life secure is very stupid and bad. I propose an entirely different one to you,—namely, this; and he goes on to utter his words from Verse 38 to Verse 42. One would think that before correcting these words it would be necessary to understand them; but this no one wants to do, for every one decides in advance that the order in which we live and which is impaired by these words is a sacred law of humanity.

I did not consider our life either good or sacred, and so I understood this commandment before the rest. And when I understood them just as they are said, I was struck by their truth, accuracy, and clearness. Christ says, You want to destroy evil by evil. That is not sensible. That there be no evil, do no evil. Then Christ counts up all the cases in which we are wont to do evil, and says that in these cases we must not do so.

This fourth commandment of Christ was the first which I comprehended, and which opened to me the meaning of all the rest. The fourth simple, clear, practicable commandment says, Never resist evil with force; never employ force in answer to force: if they beat thee, suffer; if they take away from thee, give it; if they make thee work, work; if they wish to take from thee what thou considerest thy own, give it to them.

Upon this fourth commandment follows the fifth reference and the fifth commandment. Matt. v. 43–48: Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy (Lev. xix. 17, 18): But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Formerly these words used to present themselves to me as an elucidation, complement, and confirmation, I shall even say exaggeration of the words about non-resistance to evil. But, having found a simple, applicable, definite meaning for every passage which begins with a reference to the ancient law, I anticipated a similar meaning for the present passage. After each reference the commandment was expounded, and every verse of the commandment had a meaning, and could not be thrown out, and so the same was to be expected here.

The last words, which are repeated in Luke, about this, that God makes no distinction between men and gives his good to all alike, and that, therefore, you must be like God, making no distinction between men, and must not do as the Gentiles do, but must love all and do good to all alike, — these words were clear: they presented themselves to me as a confirmation and explanation of some clear rule; but wherein this rule consisted, I was for a long time unable to comprehend.

To love our enemies? That was something impossible. That was one of those beautiful expressions upon which one cannot look otherwise than as upon an indication of an inaccessible moral ideal. That was either too much, or nothing. It is possible not to harm our enemy, but to love him, — never. Christ could not have prescribed the impossible. Besides, in the very first words, in the reference to the law of the ancients, You are told, Hate thine enemy, there was something doubtful. In all the former passages Christ quoted the actual, original words of the law of Moses; but here he adduces words which were never said. It is as though he calumniated the law.

The commentaries, as in all my former doubts, explained nothing to me. In all the commentaries they admit that the words, You are told, Hate thine enemy, are not to be found in the law of Moses, but no explanation is given of this incorrectly quoted passage from the law. They speak of how difficult it is to love our enemies, — evil men, — and generally they attempt corrections of the words of Christ; they say that it is impossible to love our enemies, but that it is possible not to wish them any evil or do them any harm. At the same time they impress upon us the permission and necessity of arraigning, that is, resisting evil; they speak of various degrees of attaining this virtue, so that from the interpretations of the church the final deduction is that Christ for some unknown reason misquoted the words of the law of Moses and uttered many beautiful, but really frivolous and inapplicable, words.

It seemed to me that that could not be so. There ought to be here a clear and definite meaning, such as is found in the first four commandments. In order to understand this meaning, I first tried to understand the meaning of the words of the incorrect reference to the law, You are told, Hate thine enemy. There is some reason why Christ with every rule quotes the words of the law, Do not kill, do not commit adultery, and so forth, and to these words opposes his own teaching. If we do not understand what he meant by the words of the law quoted by him, it is impossible to understand what it is he prescribes. In the commentaries it says outright (nor can they help saying it) that he quotes words that were not in the law, but no explanation is given why he does so, and what this incorrect quotation means.

It seemed to me that first of all it ought to be explained what Christ could have meant when he quoted the words which were not in the law. I asked myself, What can the words mean which are incorrectly quoted by Christ from the law? In all the former references to the law, Christ quoted only the mere wording of the ancient law, as, Kill not, Commit no adultery, Keep thy oaths, A tooth for a tooth, and on the ground of this one precept he expounded the corresponding doctrine. But here two opposing precepts are quoted, You have been told, Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy, so that it is evident that the distinction itself between the two precepts of the old law concerning the neighbour and the enemy is to serve as the basis of the new law. In order that I might understand more clearly wherein this distinction lay, I asked myself, What do the words neighbour and enemy mean in the Gospel language?

Having consulted the dictionaries and the contexts, I convinced myself that *neighbour* in the language of a Jew always means *a Jew* only. Such a definition of *neighbour* is given in the Gospel in the parable of the Samaritan. According to the idea of the lawyer, who asked who was a neighbour, a Samaritan could not be a neighbour. The same definition of *neighbour* is given in Acts vii. 27. *Neighbour* in Gospel language means *a countryman, a man belonging to the same nationality.* And thus, assuming that the contrast which Christ points out in this place, when he quotes the words of the law, You have been told, Love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy, consists in contrasting a countryman with a foreigner, I ask myself, what is an enemy according to the ideas of the Jews, and I find a confirmation of my assumption. The word *enemy* is used in the Gospels almost always, not in the sense of personal, but general, national enemies (Luke i. 71–74 ; Matt. xxii. 44 ; Mark xii. 36 ; Luke xx. 43, and elsewhere). The singular number in which the word *enemy* is used in these verses in the expression, Hate thine enemy, shows me that here the enemy of the nation is meant. In the Old Testament the idea of the nation's enemy is always expressed by the singular.

The moment I understood this, there was at once removed the difficulty as to why and in what manner Christ, who every time quoted the precise words of the law, should have adduced here words which had never been uttered. We need only understand the word *enemy* in the sense of a national enemy, and a *neighbour* in the sense of a countryman, in order that this difficulty should not at all exist. Christ speaks of how, according to the law of Moses, the Jews are to treat their national enemy. All those scattered passages in the various books of the Scripture, where the Jews are enjoined to oppress, and kill, and destroy the other nations, Christ unites into one expression, To hate, to do evil to the enemy. And he says, You have been told that you must love your neighbours and hate the national enemy; but I tell you, You must love all without distinction as to the nationality, to which any one may belong. And as soon as I comprehended these words, there was also removed the other difficulty as to how I was to understand the words, Love your enemies. It is impossible to love personal enemies; but it is possible to love the men of a hostile nation as your own. And it became clear to me that Christ says that all men are taught to consider the men of their own nation neighbours, and the foreign nations enemies, and that he commanded us not to do this. He says, According to the law of Moses a distinction is made between Jews and non-Jews, the national enemies, but I tell you, You must not make this distinction. And, indeed, according to Matthew and Luke, he says immediately after this rule that all are alike to God, that the sun shines and the rain falls on all men alike; God makes no distinction between nations, and does the same good to all alike; the same ought men to do for all men, without distinction of nationality, and not as the Gentiles do, who divide themselves into separate nations.

Thus there was again confirmed for me from various sides the simple, important, clear and applicable comprehension of Christ's words. Instead of a hazy utterance and indefinite philosophizing there again appeared a clear, definite, important, and practicable rule: not to make any distinction between one's own and a foreign nation, and not to do what results from this distinction, — not to harbour ill-will toward other nations, nor wage war, nor take part in wars, nor arm for war, — but to act toward all men, no matter of what nationality, as though they were of our own.

All this was so simple, so clear, that I wondered how it was I did not understand it at once.

The reason why I did not understand this was the same as in the case of the prohibition of courts and oaths. It is very hard to understand that all the courts, which are opened with Christian prayers and are blessed by those who consider themselves guardians of Christ's law, are incompatible with the confession of Christ and are directly opposed to him. Still more difficult is it to divine that the oath, to which the guardians of Christ's law lead us, is directly forbidden by this law; and it is terribly difficult to guess that that which in our life is regarded not only as necessary and natural, but also very beautiful and virtuous, — love of country, its defence and glorification, the struggle with the enemy, and so forth, — is not only a transgression of Christ's law, but even an obvious renunciation of the same.

We have closed our ears to what he has told us of our life, or have forgotten that he has told us that we must not kill, and not even be angry with another man, that we must not defend ourselves, but offer the second cheek, and that we must love our enemies, — so that now, since we are accustomed to call men, who have devoted their life to murder, the Christ-loving military, who are used to hear Te Deums addressed to Christ concerning the victory over the enemy, who base their glory and pride on murder, who have advanced the symbol of murder, the sword, to a certain kind of holiness, so that a man without this symbol — without the knife — is a disgraced man, we think that Christ has not forbidden war and that, if he had forbidden it, he would have spoken more clearly.

We forget that Christ could not have imagined that men who believe in his teaching of humility, love, and universal brotherhood would calmly and consciously establish the murder of their brothers.

Christ could not have imagined it, and so he could not have forbidden a Christian to wage war, just as a father who instructs his son how to live honestly, without offending any one and by giving his own to others, would not think of forbidding him to kill men on the highway.

Nor could one of the apostles, nor one of the disciples of Christ of the first centuries of Christianity, have imagined that it was necessary to forbid murder, called war. This, for example, is what Origen says in his reply to Celsius.

He says (Chap. LXIII.): "Celsius admonishes us that we should with all our strength aid the emperor, take part in his lawful labours, arm ourselves for him, serve under his standards, if necessary, 'lead his armies in war.' To this we must reply that we occasionally offer aid to kings, but, so to speak, divine aid, for we are girded in the mail of God. In this conduct we submit to the voice of the apostle. 'I exhort that first of all,' he says, 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority.' Thus, the more a man is pious, the more he is useful to kings, and his use is more efficacious than that of a soldier, who, having enlisted under the standards of the king, kills as many enemies as he can. Besides, to men who, not knowing our religion, demand of us that we should kill people, we can reply that even your priests do not defile their hands, in order that your God may receive their sacrifices. Even so do we."

And, concluding this chapter by an explanation that the Christians are more useful by their peaceful lives than the soldiers, Origen says: "Thus we struggle better than any one for the salvation of the emperor. It is true, we do not serve under his standards. We will not serve, even if he compels us to do so."

Such were the relations of the Christians of the first ages to war, and thus spoke their teachers, turning to the mighty of the world, at a time when the martyrs died by hundreds and by thousands for the confession of Christ's faith.

And now? Now there does not even exist the question as to whether a Christian can participate in wars. All young men, who are brought up in the church law, called Christianity, go every autumn, when their turn has come, to the military enlisting-offices, and with the aid of the church pastors renounce the law of Christ. It was only lately that a peasant refused to enter military service, basing his refusal on the Gospel. The teachers of the church tried to persuade him of his error, but as he believed Christ, and not them, he was put in prison, where he was kept until he renounced Christ. All this is done after our God announced to us Christians eighteen hundred years ago the very clear and definite commandment, Do not consider the men of the other nations thy enemies, but regard all men as thy brothers and treat all men as thou treatest the men of thy own nation, and so not only refrain from killing thy enemies, but love them and do them good.

When I thus understood the simple, definite commandments of Christ, when they were subject to no misinterpretations, I asked myself, What would happen if the Christian world believed in these commandments, not in the sense that they are to be sung or read for the propitiation of God, but in the sense of fulfilling them for the happiness of men? What would happen if men believed in the obligatoriness of these commandments at least as firmly as they believe that we must pray every day, go to church on Sunday, eat fish on Friday, and prepare ourselves every year for communion? What would happen if men believed in these commandments as they believe in the demands of the church?

I imagined the whole Christian society as living and educating the young generations in these commandments. I imagined that all of us and our children were impressed from childhood in word and deed, not by what they are impressed by now, that a man must preserve his dignity, defend his rights before others (which cannot be done otherwise than by humbling and offending others), but by this, that not one man has any rights and can be higher or lower; that only he is lower and more disgraceful who wants to stand higher than the rest; that there is no more debasing condition for man than the condition of anger against another man; that the seeming insignificance or senselessness of a man cannot justify my anger against him and my dissension with him.

Instead of the whole structure of our life, from the windows of the shops to the theatres, novels, and female apparel, which provoke carnal lusts, I imagined that we all and our children were impressed in word and deed with the idea that the enjoyment of lewd books, theatres, and balls is a very base enjoyment, and that every action which has for its purpose the adornment of the body or its accentuation is a most base and contemptible act.

Instead of the structure of our life, in which it is considered necessary and good for a young man to live in debauch before his marriage; instead of considering a life, which separates husband and wife, a most natural one; instead of legalizing a condition of women who serve for debauch, — instead of all that, I imagined that we were impressed in word and deed by the idea that the single, celibate state of a man, who has matured for sexual relations and has not renounced them, is a monstrosity and a shame, and that the abandonment by a man of a woman, with whom he has come together, and the exchange for another, are not only unnatural acts, like incest, but also cruel, inhuman acts.

Instead of having the whole life based on violence and every joy obtained and guarded by violence; instead of seeing each one of us punished or inflicting punishment from childhood to deepest old age, — I imagined that we were all impressed in word and deed by the idea that vengeance is a very low, animal feeling; that violence is not only a disgraceful act, but also one which deprives man of true happiness; that only that is the joy of life which need not be protected by violence; that the highest respect is not due to him who takes away and keeps his own from others, and whom others serve, but he who gives away his own and serves others.

Instead of considering it beautiful and legitimate for every man to swear and give everything which is most precious to him, that is, his whole life, to the will of somebody he does not know, I imagined that all were impressed with the idea that man's reasonable will is that highest holiness which man cannot give to any one, and that to promise anything to any one with an oath is a renunciation of one's rational essence, a defilement of the highest holiness.

I imagined that instead of those national hatreds which are impressed on us under the form of patriotism, instead of those glorifications of murder, called wars, which from childhood are represented to us as most valiant deeds, we were impressed with horror and contempt for all those activities, political, diplomatic, military, which serve for the separation of men; that we were impressed with the idea that the recognition of any countries, especial laws, borders, lands, is a sign of the grossest ignorance, and that to wage war, that is, to kill strangers without any cause, is a most terrible misdeed, possible only for an erring and corrupt man, who has fallen to the level of an animal.

I imagined that all men believed in this, and I asked myself what would then be.

Before this I had asked myself what would come of the execution of Christ's teaching, as I understood it, and I had involuntarily replied to myself, Nothing. We shall all pray, make use of the grace of the sacraments, believe in the redemption and salvation of ourselves and of the whole world by Christ, and still the salvation will not come from us, but from this, that there will be an end of the world. Christ will come in the proper time in his glory to judge the living and the dead, and the kingdom of God will be established independently of our life. But now the teaching of Christ, as it presented itself to me, had also another meaning: the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth depended also on us. The fulfilment of Christ's teaching, as expressed in the five commandments, established this kingdom of God. The kingdom of God on earth is the peace of all men among themselves. Peace among men is the highest accessible good on earth. Thus the kingdom of God had presented itself to all the Jewish prophets, and thus it presents itself to every human heart. All prophecies promise peace to men.

The whole teaching of Christ consists in giving the kingdom of God — peace — to men. In the sermon on the mount, in the discourse with Nicodemus, in the sending forth of the disciples, in all his instructions, he speaks only of what separates men and keeps them from being at peace and entering the kingdom of God. All the parables are only descriptions of what is the kingdom of God, which can be entered only by loving our brothers and living at peace with them. John the Baptist, Christ's precursor, says that the kingdom of God is at hand, and that Jesus Christ gives it to the world.

Christ says that he brought peace upon earth. John xiv. 27: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Indeed, these five commandments give this peace to men. All five commandments have no other purpose than that of giving peace to men. Men have only to believe in Christ's teaching and fulfil it, and there will be peace upon earth, not the peace which is established by men, temporary, accidental, private peace, but general, inviolable, eternal peace.

The first commandment says, Live in peace with all men; do not permit thyself to regard another man as insignificant or senseless (Matt. v. 22). If the peace has been broken, use all thy efforts to reëstablish it. The service of God is the annihilation of enmity (23 and 24). Make peace at the least dissension, so that thou mayest not lose the true life. In this commandment everything is said; but Christ foresees the offences of the world, which impair the peace among men, and so he gives a second commandment against the offence of the sexual relations, which impairs the peace. Do not look upon carnal beauty as upon an amusement: avoid this offence in advance (28–30); let a man take one wife, and a wife one man, and do not abandon one another under any considerations (32). Another offence is the oaths, which lead men into sin. Know in advance that it is an evil, and make no promises (34–37). The third offence is vengeance, which is called human justice; wreak no vengeance, and do not find excuses by saying that they will offend thee: bear insult, and do not return evil for evil (38–42). The fourth offence is the discrimination of nationalities, — the enmity of races and governments. Know that all men are brothers and sons of the one God, and do not break the peace with any one in the name of national purposes (43–48). If men shall not fulfil one of these commandments, peace will be broken. If men shall fulfil all the commandments, the kingdom of peace will be on earth. The commandments exclude all evil from the life of men.

Through the fulfilment of these commandments the life of men will be what every human heart seeks and desires. All men will be brothers, and everybody will always be at peace with others, enjoying all the benefits of the world during the term of life which is apportioned to them by God. Men will forge the swords into ploughshares, and spears into sickles. There will be that kingdom of God, that kingdom of peace, which all the prophets have promised, and which was at hand in the time of John the Baptist, and which Christ announced and proclaimed, speaking with the words of Isaiah, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke iv. 18 and 19; Isaiah lxi. 1 and 2).

The commandments of peace given by Christ are simple and clear; they foresee all cases of possible dissension and provide for them, and disclose this kingdom of God on earth. Consequently, Christ is indeed the Messiah. He has fulfilled the promise. It is we who are not fulfilling what all men have eternally wished, — what we have been praying for.

VII.

Why do men not do what Christ has told them to do, and what gives to them the highest accessible good, for which they have been wishing all the time? And on all sides I hear one and the same answer, expressed in different words, Christ's teaching is very good, and it is true that, if it were executed, the kingdom of God would be established upon earth, but it is hard and so impracticable.

Christ's teaching as to how men should live is divinely good and gives good to men, but it is hard for men to execute it. We repeat and hear this so often that we are not startled by the contradiction which is contained in these words.

It is a characteristic of human nature to do what is better. Every teaching about the life of men is only a teaching of what is better for men. If it is shown to men what is better for them to do, how can they say that they wish to do what is better, but are not able to do so? What men cannot do is that which is worse and they cannot help but do what is better.

Man's rational activity, ever since man has existed, has been directed to finding out what is better among those contradictions with which the life of each individual and of all men together is filled.

Men fight for land, for objects which they need, and then reach a point when they divide everything up and call it property: they find that, though it is difficult to establish this, it is better, and so maintain the property; men fight for wives, abandon their children, and then find that it is better for every man to have a family, and, although it is hard to support a family, they hold on to property, family, and many other things. The moment men discover something which is better, they act accordingly, however hard it may be. What, then, is meant by saying, "Christ's teaching is beautiful, life according to Christ's teaching is better than the one we now live, but we cannot live as is better, because it is hard?"

If this word *hard* is to be taken as meaning that it is hard to sacrifice the momentary gratification of the appetites to the greater good, why do we not say that it is hard to plough in order that we may have bread, and to set out apple-trees, in order that there may be apples?

Every being which is endowed with incipient reason knows that it is necessary to endure hardships for the sake of the greater good. Suddenly it turns out that we say that Christ's teaching is beautiful, but that it is impracticable, because it is hard: and it is hard, because, in following it, we shall be deprived of what we had not been deprived of before. We act as though we never heard that at times it is more advantageous to suffer and be deprived of something, than not to suffer at all and always to gratify our appetites.

A man may be an animal, and no one will rebuke him for it; but a man cannot reflect that he wishes to be an animal. The moment he reflects, he recognizes himself as a rational being, and, recognizing himself as such, he cannot help recognizing what is rational, and what irrational. Reason does not command anything; it only enlightens.

I have hurt my hands and knees, trying to find the door in the dark. A man comes in with a light, and I see the door. I shall no longer strike against the wall when I see the door, and still less can I affirm that I see the door and that I find that it is better to pass through the door, but that this is hard, and so I want to continue striking my knees against the wall.

In this marvellous reflection, The Christian teaching is good and gives the good to the world, but men are weak and bad, and want to do what is better, but do what is worse, and so cannot do what is better, there is an obvious misunderstanding.

It is evidently not an error of reasoning, but something else. There must be here some false conception. Only a false conception that what is not exists, and what is does not exist can bring people to that strange denial of the practicability of that which, according to their admission, gives them the good.

The false conception which has led them to this is what is called the dogmatic Christian faith, which is taught from childhood to all those who profess the Christian faith of the church according to all kinds of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant catechisms.

This faith, according to the definition of the believers, is the recognition of what seems as existing (this is said in Paul and is repeated in all theologies and catechisms, as the best definition of faith). And it is this recognition of what seems as existing which has led men to this strange assertion that Christ's teaching is good for men, but that it is of no use for them.

The doctrine of this faith in its most exact expression is like this: the personal God, who exists for ever, one in three persons, suddenly took it into his head to create the world of spirits. The good God created this world of spirits for their benefit; but it happened that one of the spirits became very bad and, therefore, unhappy. Much time passed, and God created another world, the material world, and man, again for his good. God created man blessed, immortal, and sinless. Man's blessedness consisted in using the good of the world without labour: his immortality consisted in this, that he was to live so for ever; his sinlessness consisted in his not knowing evil.

This man was tempted in paradise by that spirit of the first creation, who of himself became evil, and then man fell, and there were born just such fallen men, and after that men began to work, be sick, suffer, die, struggle bodily and spiritually, that is, the imaginary man became the real man, such as we know him, and such that we cannot and have no right or reason to imagine him otherwise. The condition of a working, suffering man, who chooses the good and avoids the evil, and who dies, such as it is and outside of which we cannot imagine anything, is, according to the doctrine of the faith, not the real condition of man, but his unreal, accidental, temporary state.

Although this state has, according to this doctrine, lasted since Adam's expulsion from paradise, that is, since the beginning of the world to the birth of Christ, and has been continued the same for all men, it is only an accidental and temporary state. According to this doctrine, the son of God, God himself, the second person of the Trinity, was sent by God upon earth in the shape of a man, that he might save men from this improper, accidental, temporary state, take off of them all the curses which were imposed on them by the same God for Adam's sin, and reëstablish them in their former natural state of bliss, that is, of freedom from disease, of immortality, sinlessness, and idleness. The second person of the Trinity, Christ, according to this teaching, redeemed Adam's sin by the very fact that men executed him, and put a stop to this unnatural condition of man, which had lasted since the beginning of the world. Since then, man, believing in Christ, became once more such as he had been in paradise, that is, immortal, free from disease, sinless, and idle.

On that part of the realization of the redemption, by dint of which after Christ the earth began for the believers everywhere to bear without labour, the diseases stopped, and children were born of mothers without suffering, this doctrine does not dwell, because it is difficult to impress those who have to work hard and who suffer grievously that it is not hard to work and not painful to suffer. But that part of the doctrine, according to which there is no death and no sin, is affirmed with especial force.

It is affirmed that the dead continue to live, and since the dead are not able in any way to confirm the fact that they are dead, nor that they live, just as a stone cannot confirm that it can speak or not, this absence of any denial is taken as a proof, and it is affirmed that the men who have died are not dead. And with still greater solemnity and confidence it is affirmed that after Christ a man is freed from sin through faith in him, that is, that after Christ a man no longer needs illuminate his life through reason and choose what is best for him. All he has to do is to believe that Christ redeemed him from sin, and then he is sinless, that is, entirely good. According to this teaching, men must imagine that reason is powerless in them, and that, therefore, they are sinless, that is, cannot err.

A true believer must imagine that since the time of Christ the earth has brought forth fruit without labour, children are born without pain, there are no diseases, there is no death and no sin, that is, there are no errors, that is, there is not what is, and there is what is not.

Thus speaks the strictly logical theological theory.

This doctrine is harmless in itself. But the departure from truth is never harmless, and leads to consequences which are the more serious, the more serious the subject is, in respect to which the untruth is said. But here the subject in respect to which the untruth is said is the whole human life.

What according to this doctrine is called the true life, is the personal, blissful, sinless, and eternal life, that is, such as no one ever knew and as does not exist. But the life which exists, which alone we know, which we live, which all humanity has lived, is according to this doctrine a fallen, bad life, — a sample only of the good life which is due us.

The struggle between the striving after the animal life and that after the rational life, which lies in the soul of each man and forms the essence of the life of each man, is according to this doctrine entirely removed. This struggle is transferred to the incident which took place in paradise with Adam at the creation of the world. The question as to whether I shall eat the apples that tempt me, or not, does not exist for man according to this teaching. This question was once for all solved in paradise by Adam in a negative sense. Adam sinned for me, that is, made a mistake, and all men, all of us, are irretrievably fallen, and all our efforts to live sensibly are useless and even godless. I am incorrigibly bad, and must know this. My salvation is not in this, that I can enlighten life by means of reason and, having learned what is good and bad, do what is best. No, Adam has once for all acted badly for me, and Christ has once for all corrected this evil done by Adam, and so I must, as a spectator, be contrite concerning Adam's fall and rejoice at Christ's salvation.

But all that love of goodness and truth which lies in the soul of man, all his efforts to enlighten the phenomena of life by means of reason, my whole spiritual life, — all that is not only of no importance according to this doctrine, but is also seduction or pride.

Life, such as there is here upon earth, with all its joys and beauties, with all the struggle of reason against darkness, — the life of all men who have lived before my time, my whole life, with my internal struggle and conquests of reason, is not the true life, but a fallen and hopelessly corrupted life: but the true, sinless life is in faith, that is, in imagination, that is, in insanity.

Let a man, renouncing the habit, acquired in childhood, of admitting this, try and look at this doctrine in a simple and direct manner; let him mentally transfer himself into a fresh man, educated outside this teaching, and imagine how this doctrine will appear to such a man. Why, it is the merest madness!

No matter how strange and terrible it was for me to think so, I could not help but acknowledge this, because this alone explained to me that remarkable contradictory, senseless resort which I hear on all sides against the practicableness of Christ's teaching: It is good and gives happiness to men, but men cannot fulfil it.

Only the conception of what does not exist as existing, and of what exists as not existing, could have brought men to this strange contradiction. And such a false conception I found in the pseudo-Christian faith which has been preached for fifteen hundred years.

But it is not the believers alone who object to Christ's teaching, saying that it is good, but impracticable; this is done also by the unbelievers, by men who do not believe, or think that they do not believe, in the dogma of the fall and the redemption. The objection to Christ's teaching, which consists in its impracticableness, is made by men of science, by philosophers, in general by educated men, who consider themselves free from the superstition of the fall and the redemption. And so it had seemed to me at first. It had also seemed to me that these learned men had other grounds for denying the practicableness of Christ's teaching. But, when I entered deeper into the foundations of their denial, I convinced myself that the unbelievers had the same false conception that our life is not what it is, but what it seems to them, and that this conception is based on the same foundation as the conception of the believers. Those who profess to be unbelievers, it is true, believe neither in God, nor in Christ, nor in Adam; but they believe even more firmly than the theologians in the fundamental false conception as to man's rights to a blessed life, on which everything is based.

Let privileged science with its philosophy boast as much as it please, assuring us that it is the moderator and guide of the minds, — it is not the guide, but the servant. The world conception is always given to it ready-made by religion, and science only works on the path indicated to it by religion. Religion discloses the meaning of the life of men, and science applies this meaning to the various sides of life. And so, if religion gives a false meaning to life, science, which is educated in this religious world conception, will from various sides apply this false meaning to the life of men. Even so it has happened with our European, Christian science and philosophy.

The church doctrine gave the fundamental meaning of the life of men, asserting that man had a right to a blessed life, and that this blessedness is obtained not by the efforts of man, but by something external, and this world conception has become the foundation of our whole science and philosophy.

Religion, science, public opinion all say in one voice that the life which we lead is bad, but that the teaching as to how we may ourselves try to be better, and thus make life itself better, is impracticable.

Christ's teaching in the sense of improving the life of man by his rational efforts is impracticable, because Adam fell and the world lies in evil, says religion.

This teaching is impracticable, because human life is accomplished according to certain laws which are independent of the will of man, says our philosophy. Philosophy and the whole science says with other words precisely what religion says with its dogma of the first fall and the redemption.

In the doctrine of the redemption there are two fundamental propositions, on which everything is based: (1) the lawful life of man is the blessed life, while the life of the world is bad and cannot be mended through man's efforts, and (2) the salvation from this life is in faith.

These two propositions became the foundation of the world conception both of the believers and the unbelievers of our pseudo-Christian society. From the second proposition resulted the church with its establishments. From the first proposition result our social opinion and our philosophical and political theories.

All the philosophical and political theories which justify the existing order, Hegelism and its children, are based on this proposition. Pessimism, which demands of life what it cannot give, and which, therefore, denies life, results from the same.

Materialism, with its remarkable rapturous assertion that man is a process and nothing else, is a lawful child of this doctrine, which assumes that the present life is a fallen life. Spiritualism, with its learned followers, is the best proof of this, that the scientific and philosophical conceptions are not free, but are based on the religious doctrine of the blessed eternal life, which is peculiar to man.

The distortion of the meaning of life has distorted the whole rational activity of man. The dogma of man's fall and redemption has screened from men the most important and legitimate sphere of man's activity and has excluded from the whole sphere of the human knowledge the knowledge of what a man must do that he may be happier and better. Science and philosophy, imagining that they act hostilely to the pseudo-Christianity, and priding themselves on it, work only for it. Science and philosophy treat of everything you please, except of how a man can be and live better. What is called ethics — moral teaching — has entirely disappeared in our pseudo-Christian society.

Both believers and unbelievers alike do not ask themselves how we must live and use the reason which is given to us, but, Why is our human life not such as we imagined it to be, and when will it be such as we want it to be?

Only thanks to this false doctrine, which has entered the flesh and blood of our generations, could there have happened that remarkable phenomenon, which is that man has apparently disgorged that apple of the knowledge of good and evil, which, according to tradition, he ate in paradise, and, forgetting that man's whole history consists only in solving the contradictions of the rational and the animal nature, has begun to use his reason for the purpose of finding the historical laws of his animal nature alone.

The religious and philosophical teachings of all the nations, except the philosophical teachings of the pseudo-Christian world, all which we know, — Judaism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Brahmanism, Greek philosophy, — all the teachings have for their aim the arrangement of the human life and the elucidation of how each must strive to be and live better. The whole Confucianism is in the personal perfection, Judaism — in the personal fulfilment of each covenant with God, Buddhism — in the teaching of how each can save himself from the evil of life. Socrates taught personal perfection in the name of reason; the Stoics recognized rational freedom as the one basis of true life.

Man's whole rational activity could not help but consist, and has always consisted, in the enlightenment by reason of the striving after the good. The freedom of the will, says our philosophy, is an illusion, and it is very proud of the boldness of this assertion. But the freedom of the will is not only an illusion, it is a word which has no meaning whatever. This word is invented by theologians and criminalists, and to oppose this word would be the same as fighting windmills. But reason, which enlightens our life and compels us to change our acts, is not an illusion, and this can in no way be denied. The following of reason for the purpose of obtaining the good, — in this has always consisted the teaching of all true teachers of humanity, and in this consists the teaching of Christ, and it is impossible to deny reason by means of reason.

Christ's teaching is the teaching about the son of man, common to all men, that is, about the striving after the good, common to all men, about the common reason, which enlightens man in this striving. It is quite superfluous to prove that the son of man means the son of man. If we wish to understand by the son of man something different from what these words mean, it is necessary to prove that, in defining what he wished to say, Christ intentionally used words which had an entirely different significance. But even if, as the church wants it, the son of man means the son of God, the son of man still means man by its essence, because Christ calls all men sons of God.

Christ's teaching about the son of man, the son of God, which forms the foundation of all the gospels, is most clearly expressed in the discourse with Nicodemus. Every man, he says, in addition to recognizing his carnal personal life, proceeding from a male father in the womb of a carnal mother, cannot help but recognize his birth from above (John iii. 5–7). What man recognizes in himself as free is that which is born of the infinite, of that which we call God (11–14). This which is born of God, this son of God in man, we must lift up in ourselves, in order that we may receive the true life (14–17). The son of man is the monogenous (of the same birth, and not the only-begotten) son of God. He who exalts in himself this son of God above everything else, who believes that life is only in this, will not be in disseverance from life. The disseverance from life is due only to this, that men do not believe in the light which is in them (18–21). (That light of which it says in the Gospel of John that in it is life, and that life is the light of men).

Christ taught us to exalt above all else the son of man, that is the son of God and the light of men. He says, When you lift up (exalt) the son of man, you will know that I speak nothing of myself personally (John xii. 32, 44, 49). The Jews do not understand his teaching, and ask, Who is this son of man who is to be lifted up? (John xii. 34). And to this question he replies (John xii. 35), Yet a little while is the light in[1] you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. In reply to the question as to what is meant by lifting up the son of man, Christ says, To live in the light which is in men.

The son of man, according to Christ's answer, is the light in which men must walk, while there is light in them.

Luke xi. 35: Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

Matt. vi. 23: If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! he says, instructing all men.

Before and after Christ, men have said the same, that there is in man a divine light, which came down from heaven, and this light is reason, and that it alone is to be served, and in it alone the good is to be found. Thus spoke the teachers of the Brahmins, and the Jewish prophets, and Confucius, and Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus, and all the true sages, not the composers of philosophical theories, but those men who sought the truth for their own good and for the good of all men.[2]

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[1] In all the church translations there is an intentional mistranslation in this place: instead of *in you*, *ἐν ὑμῖν*, these words are everywhere translated by *with you*. — *Author's Note.*

[2] Marcus Aurelius says: "Revere that which is most powerful in the world, that which makes use of everything and governs everything. Revere also what is in thee: it is like the first, because it makes use of what is in thee, and governs thy life."

Epictetus says: "God sowed his seed not only in my father and grandfather, but also in all beings which live upon earth, especially in

Suddenly we recognize by the dogma of the redemption that we must not even speak or think of this light in man. We must think, say the believers, only of what attributes each person of the Trinity has, and of what sacraments must be performed, and what not, because the salvation of men will be accomplished, not by our efforts, but by the Trinity and the correct performance of the sacraments. We must think, say the unbelievers, of this, by what laws an infinitely small particle of matter accomplishes its motion in infinite space and infinite time; but we must not think of what man's reason needs for its good, because the betterment of man's condition will not come from him, but from general laws, which we shall discover.

I am convinced that in a few centuries the history of the so-called scientific activity of our boasted last centuries of the European humanity will form an inexhaustible subject of laughter and pity for the future generations. For several centuries the learned men of the small western part of the great continent lived in outright madness, imagining that to them belonged eternal, blessed life, and busied themselves with all kinds of lucubrations as to how and by what laws this life would come to them; but they themselves did nothing and never thought of how they might make their life better. And what will appear even more tragic to the future historian is this, that he will find that these men had a teacher who showed them clearly and definitely what they ought to do in order that they might live more happily, and that the words of this

the rational beings, for they alone enter into relation with God through their reason, by which they are united with him."

In the book of Confucius it says: "The law of the great science consists in developing and establishing the principle of the light of reason, which we received from heaven." This proposition is repeated several times and serves as the foundation of the teaching of Confucius. — *Author's Note.*

teacher were explained by some as meaning that he would come to arrange everything in the clouds, and by others, that these words were beautiful, but impracticable, because the life of man is not such as we want it to be, and so it is not worth while to busy ourselves with it, while man's reason ought to be directed to the study of the laws of this life without any reference to the good of man.

The church says: Christ's teaching is impracticable, because the life here is a sample of the real life; it cannot be good, — it is all in evil. The best means for passing this life consists in despising it, and living by faith, that is, by imagining a future, blessed, eternal life, but living here no matter how, and praying.

Philosophy, science, public opinion say: Christ's teaching is impracticable, because man's life does not depend on that light of reason with which he can enlighten life itself, but on general laws, and so it is not necessary to enlighten this life by reason and live in accordance with it, but to live no matter how, believing firmly that according to the laws of historical, sociological, and other laws, after we shall have lived badly for a long time, our life will naturally become very good.

Men come to an estate and find there everything necessary for their life, — a house with all its furnishings, granaries full of grain, cellars, storehouses full of all provisions; in the yard there are agricultural implements, tools, harnesses, horses, cows, sheep, a complete farm outfit, — everything necessary for a life of sufficiency. Men come from all sides to this estate and begin to make use of everything they find there, each for himself, without thinking of leaving anything to those who are now with them in the house, nor to those who will come after. Each wants everything for himself. Each hastens to make use of what he can, and there begins the destruction of everything, — a struggle, a fight for the objects of possession the milch cow, the unshorn sheep, the sows heavy with young are killed for meat; they make fires with looms and wagons, fight for the milk and the grain, and spill and ruin more than they make use of. No one will eat a thing in peace, but will scowl at the stronger man who comes and takes it away from him, and a third man will take it from the second.

Exhausted and beaten, the men, starved, leave the estate. Again the master prepares everything on the estate so that men may live peacefully on it. Again the estate is a full bowl; and again passers-by stop there, and again there is fighting and jostling, and everything goes to ruin, and the men go away, cursing and reproaching their companions and the master, because he has prepared so poorly and so little. Again the good master fixes the estate in such a way that men may live on it, and again, and again, and again it is the same.

And suddenly among the new arrivals there is a teacher, who says to the others, Brothers, we do not do right. See how many good things there are on this estate, and how well everything is arranged! There is enough for all of us, and there will be something left for those who come after us, if only we shall live according to reason. Let us not take away from one another, but let us help each other. We shall sow and plough and raise cattle, and all will live well.

And it happened so that a few men understood what the teacher was saying, and those who understood began to do so: they stopped quarrelling and taking away from one another, and began to work. But the rest, who had either not heard the teacher's speeches, or had heard, but did not believe them, did not do according to the words of the man, but continued to fight as before, and ruined the estate, and went away. Others came, and the same happened. Those who listened to the teacher kept repeating, Do not fight, do not ruin the master's goods, and you will be better off. Do as the teacher told you to do.

But still there were many who did not hear, nor believe, and things went for a long time as of old. All this was natural and had to be so, as long as men did not believe what the teacher was saying. But, they say, the time came when all on the estate heard the teacher's words, and all understood them : they did more than understand them, — they acknowledged that it was God himself who was speaking through the teacher, that the teacher himself was God, and all believed in every word of the teacher, as though it were holy. But, they say, instead of living according to the words of the teacher, it turned out that afterward not one man kept from fighting, but they started to belabour one another, and all began to say that now they knew for certain that that was proper and that it could not be otherwise.

What does this mean ? Even cattle manage to eat their feed in such a way as not to waste it uselessly, and men have learned how to live better, have come to believe that God himself ordered them to live so, and live even worse, because, they say, it is impossible to live in any other way. These men imagined something else. What could these men on the estate have imagined, that, believing in the words of the teacher, they should continue their life as of old, taking away from one another, fighting, ruining the property and themselves ? It is this : the teacher told them, Your life on this estate is bad ; live better and your life will be good ; but they imagined that the teacher condemned all life on this estate, and promised them another, a good life, not on this estate, but somewhere in another place. And they decided that this was only a hostelry, and that it was not worth while trying to live well in it, but that they must see to it how they might not lose the promised good life in the other place. Only in this way can we explain the strange conduct of those men on the estate, who believe that the teacher was God, and of those who consider him a wise man and his words just, but continue to live as of old, contrary to the advice of the teacher.

Men have heard and comprehended everything, but have failed to hear that the teacher spoke only of this, that men must find their happiness here, on the estate, on which they have met and which they imagine is a hostelry, while the real estate is somewhere else. And this has led to the remarkable reflection that the words of the teacher are very beautiful and are even the words of God, but that it is difficult to carry them out now.

If men would only stop ruining one another and waiting for some one to come and help them, — Christ in the clouds with the voice of trumpets, or the historical law, or the law of the differentiation and integration of forces! Nobody will help them if they do not help themselves. There is no need of helping them. All they have to do is not to expect anything from heaven, nor from earth, and to stop ruining themselves.

VIII.

But let us suppose that Christ's teaching gives bliss to the world; let us suppose that it is rational, and man on the basis of reason has no right to renounce it. What is one man to do amidst a world of men who do not fulfil the law of Christ? If all men suddenly agreed to fulfil Christ's law, its execution would be possible, but one man alone cannot go against the whole world.

If I alone amidst a world of men who do not fulfil Christ's teaching, they generally say, will fulfil everything, will give away what I have, will offer my cheek, without defending myself, and will not even agree to swearing and making war, I shall be robbed of everything, and if I do not die of hunger, they will beat me to death, and if they do not beat me to death, they will put me in prison or shoot me, and I shall without a cause ruin the happiness of my life and my life itself.

This retort is based on the same misunderstanding on which is based the objection of the impracticableness of Christ's teaching.

Thus people generally speak, and thus thought I before I completely freed myself of the church doctrine, and before I, consequently, understood Christ's teaching about life in its whole significance.

Christ offers his teaching about life as a salvation from that perishable life which men live who do not follow his teaching, and suddenly I say that I should be glad to follow his teaching, but that I am sorry to ruin my life. Christ teaches the salvation from a perishable life, and I pity this perishable life. Consequently, I do not consider this life at all perishable, but something real, something belonging to me and good. In this assumption of this worldly, personal life as something real and belonging to me, lies the misunderstanding which prevents people from understanding Christ's teaching. Christ knows this delusion of people, by which they regard their personal life as something real and belonging to themselves, and shows them in a whole series of sermons and parables that they have no right to life, and that they have no life until they have obtained the true life, having renounced the phantom of life, of what they call their life.

In order that we may understand Christ's teaching about the salvation of life, we must first of all understand what all the prophets have said, what Solomon said, what Buddha said, what all the sages of the world have said about the personal life of man. It is possible, according to Pascal's utterance, not to think of this, to carry in front of us little screens which should shield from view the abyss of death, toward which we are running; but we need only think what the single personal life of man is, in order that we may be convinced that this whole life, if it is only a personal life, has no meaning whatsoever for each separate man, and that it is even an evil jest on the heart, on the reason of man, on what there is good in man. And so, in order that we may understand Christ's teaching, we must first of all regain our senses, bethink ourselves to have the *μετάνοια* accomplished in us, — of what, preaching his doctrine, Christ's predecessor, John, said to men who were as misled as we are. He says, First of all repent, that is, regain your senses, or else you are lost. He says, The axe is laid unto the root of the tree, to cut it down. Death and destruction are here, near each man. Do not forget this, regain your senses. And Christ, beginning his sermon, says, Bethink yourselves, or else you will all perish.

Luke xiii. 1–5: Christ is told of the destruction of the Galileans killed by Pilate. And he says, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

If he lived at the present time in Russia, he would say, Do you think that those who were burned in the circus at Berdíchev or who perished on the Kukúev Rampart were more guilty than the rest? You will all perish in the same way, if you do not find in your life that which does not perish. The death of those who were crushed by the tower and who were burned in the circus terrifies you, but your death, just as terrible and just as inevitable, stands just as much before you, and in vain do you try to forget it. When it comes unexpectedly, it will be still more terrible.

He says (Luke xii. 54–57), When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

By tokens you tell in advance what the weather will be, so how is it that you do not see what will happen with you? Run away from danger, guard thy life as much as thou wilt, and yet either Pilate will kill thee, or the tower crush thee, and if not Pilate and not the tower, thou wilt die in thy bed in worse agony.

Calculate in a simple way, as people do when they undertake something, when they build a tower, go to war, or build a factory. They undertake and work over that which must have a rational end.

Luke xiv. 28–31: For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Is it not senseless to work over that which, no matter how much thou mayest try, will never be finished? Death will always come earlier than the tower of thy worldly happiness will be finished. And if thou knowest in advance that, no matter how much thou mayest struggle with death, not thou wilt conquer death, but death will conquer thee, is it not better not to struggle with it and not to put thy soul into what will certainly perish and to seek some work which will not be destroyed by inevitable death?

Luke xii. 22–27: And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

No matter how much you may care for your body and your food, you cannot add one hour[1] to your life. Is it, then, not senseless to care for what you cannot do?

You know full well that your life will end in death, and you are concerned about securing your life by means of possessions. You must understand that this is a ridiculous deception, with which you deceive yourselves.

There can be no meaning of life, says Christ, in what we possess and what we acquire, in which we are not ourselves; it must be in something else.

He says (Luke xii. 16–21): A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Death stands over you every moment, and so (Luke xii. 35, 36, 38–40): Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

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[1] These words are incorrectly translated: the word ἡλικία means *age, time of life:* and so the whole expression means, You cannot add an hour to your life. — *Author's Note.*

The parable of the virgins waiting for the bridegroom, the end of the world, and the terrible judgment, — all those places, according to the opinion of all commentators, have, in addition to the meaning of the end of the world, also the meaning of death which always, at every hour, awaits man.

Death, death, death awaits you every second. Your life is accomplished with death in view. If you work personally for yourself in the future, you know yourself that in the future there is but one thing for you, — death. This death destroys everything which you have worked for. Consequently, life cannot have any meaning in itself. If there is a rational life, it must be different, that is, such that the aim of it is not life for oneself in the future. To live rationally we must live in such a way that death cannot destroy life.

Luke x. 41 and 42: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful.

All those endless deeds which we do for ourselves in the future are not necessary for ourselves: all that is a deception with which we deceive ourselves. Only one thing is needful.

From the day of birth the state of man is such that inevitable ruin, that is, senseless life and senseless death, awaits him, if he does not find that one thing which he needs for the true life. This one thing, which gives the true life, Christ reveals to men. He does not invent it and does not promise to give it by his divine power; he only shows men that together with that personal life, which is an unquestionable deception, there must be that which is the truth, and not a deception.

By the parable of the husbandmen of the vineyard (Matt. xxi. 33–42) Christ elucidates this source of the delusion of men, which conceals this truth from them and compels them to accept the phantom of life, their personal life, for the true life.

Men, living in the master's well-cared garden, have come to imagine that they are the owners of this garden. And from this false representation there results a series of senseless and cruel acts of these men, which ends in their expulsion, their exclusion from life; even so we have imagined that the life of each one of us is our personal possession, and that we have the right to it and may use it as we please, without being under any obligations to any one. And for us, who have imagined this, such a series of senseless and cruel acts and misfortunes and such an exclusion from life are just as inevitable. And as it seems to the husbandmen that the fiercer they are the better they will secure themselves, — and kill the messengers and the master's son, — even so it seems to us that the fiercer we shall be the better we shall secure ourselves.

Just as the husbandmen inevitably fare badly in that the master drives away those who are not giving to any one the fruits of the garden, even so fare people who imagine that the personal life is the real life. Death drives them out of life, putting new men in their place, not as a punishment, but because the first did not understand life. As the inhabitants of the garden either forgot, or did not know, that the garden was turned over to them all dug up, fenced in, and with a good well, and that some one had worked for them and so expected work from them: even so men who live a personal life have forgotten, or wish to forget, everything that was done for them before their birth and that is being done during the whole time of their life, and what, therefore, is expected of them: they wish to forget that all the benefits of life which they enjoy are given to them, and so must be transferred and given back.

This correction of the view of life, this *μετάνοια*, is the corner-stone of Christ's teaching, as he himself said at the end of this parable. According to Christ's teaching, just as the husbandmen, living in the garden which is not prepared by them, must understand and feel that they are in insolvable indebtedness to their master, so men must understand and feel that, from the day of their birth to their death, they are always in insolvable indebtedness to those who lived before them and now live and will live later, and to that which was and is and will be the beginning of everything. They must understand that by every hour of their life, during which they do not cease this life, they confirm this obligation, and that, therefore, a man who lives for himself and denies this obligation, which binds him with life and its beginning, deprives himself of life; he must understand that, living in this manner, he, though wishing to preserve life, ruins it, — precisely what Christ repeated so many times.

The true life is only the one which continues the past life and which coöperates with the good of the contemporary life and with that of the future life.

To be a participant in this life, a man must renounce his will for the purpose of fulfilling the will of the Father of life, who gave it to the son of man.

The servant, who does his own will and not that of the master, does not live eternally in the house of the master; but the son who does the will of the Father lives for ever. Christ expresses the same idea in another place (John viii. 35).

But the will of the Father of life is not the life of a separate individual, but of the one son of man who lives in men; and so man preserves life only when he looks upon his life as upon a pledge, a talent, given him by the Father, that he may serve the life of all, when he lives not for himself, but for the son of man.

Matt. xxv. 14–46. A master gave to each of his servants part of his estate and, without saying anything to them, left them alone. Some of the servants, though they had not heard any command from the master as to how to make use of the master's property, understood that the property was not theirs, but the master's, and that the property ought to be increased, and so worked for the master. And the servants who worked for the master became the participants in the master's life, while those who did not work were deprived even of what was given to them.

The life of the son of man is given to all men, and they are not told why it is given to them. Some men understand that the life is not their property, but is given to them as a gift and ought to serve the life of the son of man, and they live accordingly. Others, under the pretext that they do not understand the aim of life, do not serve life. And the men who serve life unite with the source of life, and the men who do not serve life are deprived of it. And so, from Verse 31 to Verse 46, Christ tells about what the serving of the son of man consists in and about what the reward for this service will be. The son of man, according to Christ's expression, will say, like a king, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom for having given me drink and meat, and having dressed me, taken me in, and consoled me, for I am one and the same in you and in these little ones, whom you pitied and treated well. You have lived, not the personal life, but the life of the son of man, and so you have the eternal life.

It is only this eternal life that Christ teaches according to all the gospels, and, however strange it may be to say so about Christ, who personally rose from the dead, and promised to raise all from the dead. Christ not only failed to confirm the personal resurrection and immortality beyond the grave, but even to the reëstablishment of the dead in the kingdom of the Messiah, which the Pharisees had founded, he ascribed a meaning which excludes the conception of a personal resurrection.

The Sadducees disputed the reëstablishment of the dead.

The Pharisees acknowledged it, just as the orthodox Jews recognize it nowadays.

The reëstablishment of the dead (and not the resurrection, as the word is improperly translated), according to the belief of the Jews, will take place at the coming of the time of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth. And so Christ, meeting with this belief in the temporal, spatial, and carnal resurrection, denies it, and in its place puts his teaching of the reëstablishment of the eternal life in God.

When the Sadducees, who do not acknowledge the reëstablishment of the dead, ask Christ, assuming that he will share the conception of the Pharisees, Whose will the wife of seven brothers be? he gives a clear and definite answer.

He says (Matt. xxii. 29–32; Mark xii. 24–27; Luke xx. 34–38), You are mistaken, for you do not understand the Scripture and the power of God. And, rejecting the conception of the Pharisees, he says, The reëstablishment from the dead is not carnal and not personal. Those who arrive at the reëstablishment from the dead become the sons of God and live like angels (the power of God) in heaven (that is, with God), and for them there cannot exist personal questions, such as, whose wife she is, for, in uniting with God, they cease being personalities. But as to there existing a reëstablishment from the dead, he says, retorting to the Sadducees, who acknowledge only an earthly existence and nothing but a carnal earthly life, Have you not read what God has told you? In the Scripture it says that God told Moses in the burning bush, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. If God said to Moses that he was the God of Jacob, Jacob is not dead for God, for God is the God of the living only, and not of the dead. For God all are living. And so, if there is a living God, then that man lives who has entered into communion with the eternally living God.

Christ says against the Pharisees that the reëstablishment of life cannot be carnal or personal. Against the Sadducees he says that besides the personal and the temporal life there is also a life in the communion with God.

In denying the personal, carnal resurrection, Christ recognizes the reëstablishment of life in that man transfers his life into God. Christ teaches the salvation from the personal life and assumes this salvation in the exaltation of the son of man and of life in God. Uniting this teaching of his with the doctrine of the Jews about the coming of the Messiah, he speaks to the Jews of the reëstablishment of the son of man from the dead, meaning by this not the carnal and personal reëstablishment of the dead, but the awakening of life in God. But of the carnal, personal resurrection he never spoke. As the best proof that Christ never preached the resurrection of men serve those two only passages which are adduced by the theologians in confirmation of his doctrine of the resurrection. These two passages are: Matt. xxv. 31–46 and John v. 28 and 29. The first speaks of the coming, that is, the reëstablishment, the exaltation of the son of man (just as it is mentioned in Matt. x. 23), and then the greatness and power of the son of man is compared with a king. The second passage speaks of the reëstablishment of the true life here upon earth, as this is expressed in the preceding 24th verse.

We need only try to grasp the meaning of Christ's teaching about the eternal life in God, and to reëstablish in our imagination the doctrine of the Jewish prophets, in order that we may understand that, if Christ wanted to preach the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which just then began to enter into the Talmud and was a subject of dispute, he would have expressed this doctrine clearly and definitely; he, on the contrary, not only failed to do so, but even rejected it, and in all the gospels it is impossible to find a single passage which would confirm this doctrine. But the above quoted two passages signify something very different.

Of his own personal resurrection, no matter how strange this may appear to those who have not studied the gospels, Christ has never spoken anywhere. If, as the theologians teach, the foundation of the belief in Christ consists in this, that Christ rose from the dead, — the least we may expect would be that Christ, knowing that he would rise from the dead, and that in this the chief dogma of the faith in him would consist, would say so clearly and definitely at least once. But he not only did not say so clearly and definitely even once; according to the canonical gospels he not even once made any reference to it. Christ's teaching is this, that we should exalt the son of man, that is, the essence of the life of man, — to recognize ourselves as sons of God. Christ personifies in himself the man who has recognized his filial relation to God (Matt. xvi. 13–20). He asks his disciples what men say of him, the son of man. The disciples say that some regard him as John miraculously risen from the dead, or as a prophet, and others, as Elijah who has come down from heaven. And how do you understand me? he asks. And Peter, understanding Christ as he understood himself, replies, Thou art the Messiah, the son of the living God. And Christ says, Not the flesh and blood have revealed this to thee, but our Father in heaven, that is, Thou hast comprehended this, not because thou hast believed the human interpretations, but because, recognizing thyself as the son of God, thou hast comprehended me. And, having explained to Peter that on this filial relation to God the true faith is based, Christ says to his disciples (20) that they should not henceforth say that he, Jesus, was the Messiah.

After this Christ says that, although they would torture and kill him, the son of God, having acknowledged himself to be a son of God, will none the less be reëstablished and will triumph over everything. And it is these words that are interpreted as a prediction of his resurrection.

John ii. 19–22 ; Matt. xii. 40 ; Luke xi. 30 ; Matt. xvi. 4, 21 ; Mark viii. 31 ; Luke ix. 22 ; Matt. xvii. 23 ; Mark ix. 31 ; Matt. xx. 19 ; Mark x. 34 ; Luke xviii. 33 ; Matt. xxvi. 32 ; Mark xiv. 28. These are all the fourteen places which are understood to mean that Christ predicted his resurrection. In three of these places reference is made to Jonah in the belly of the whale, and in one to the reëstablishment of the temple. In the remaining ten places it says that the son of man cannot be destroyed ; but nowhere is there one word in respect to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In all these passages there is not even the word *resurrection* in the original. Give to a man who does not know the theological interpretations, but who knows Greek, all these passages to translate, and never will one translate them as they are translated. In the original we have here two different words *ἀνίστημι* and *ἐγείρω*. One of these words means *to raise up* (reëstablish) ; the other means *to wake,* and in the middle voice *to wake up, get up.* But neither the one nor the other can under any consideration mean *to raise from the dead.* To convince ourselves fully that these Greek words and the Hebrew *kum,* which corresponds to them, cannot mean to raise from the dead, we need only compare those passages of the Gospel where these words are used : they are used a great number of times, and not once are they translated by *to raise from the dead, auferstehen, ressusciter:* such words do not exist either in the Greek or the Hebrew language, even as the corresponding conceptions are wanting. In order to express in Greek or in Hebrew the conception of the resurrection, a paraphrase is needed: we have to say rose, or woke, from the dead. Even so it says in Luke xvi. 31, in the parable of Lazarus, that if one rose from the dead, he would not be believed. But where the words *from the dead* are not added to *rise* and *wake*, we have not the idea of the resurrection. Speaking of himself, Christ never, not even once in all the passages which are quoted in proof of his prediction that he would rise from the dead, uses the words *from the dead.*

Our conception of the resurrection is to such a degree foreign to the ideas of Jews about life that we cannot even imagine how Christ could have spoken to the Jews of the resurrection and of the eternal, personal life which is peculiar to each man. The conception of the future personal life did not come to us from the Jewish teaching, nor from Christ's teaching. It has entered the doctrine of the church from an entirely different source. However strange it may appear, we cannot help but say that the belief in the future personal life is a very low and gross conception, which is based on the confusion of sleep with death, and which is peculiar to all savages, and that the Jewish teaching, not to speak of the Christian teaching, stood incomparably higher than that. We are so convinced that this superstition is something very elevated that we most seriously prove the superiority of our teaching over the others by the very fact that we hold to this superstition, while others, like the Chinese and the Hindoos, do not keep it. This is proved not only by the theologians, but also by the freethinking learned historians of religion, by Tiele and Max Müller, and others; in classifying the religions, they acknowledge that those who share this superstition are higher than those who do not share it. The freethinking Schopenhauer in so many words calls the Jewish religion the most contemptible (*niederträchtigste*) of all religions because there is not in it an idea (*keine Idee*) of the immortality of the soul.

In reality, in the Jewish religion there was not even such a conception or word. The eternal life is in Hebrew *khaye-olam. Olam* means *what is infinite, imperturbable in time;* it means also *the world, cosmos.* Life in general, and so much the more the eternal life, *khaye-olam,* is, according to the teaching of the Jews, peculiar to God alone. God is the God of life, God is alive. Man, according to the conception of the Jews, is always mortal, and God alone lives always. In the Pentateuch the words *eternal life* are used twice, once in Deuteronomy, the other time in Genesis. In Deut. xxxii. 39 and 40 God says, See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. The second time, in Gen. iii. 22: God says, Man has eaten of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and has become as one of us; he may stretch out his hands and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever. These are the only two cases of the use of the words eternal life in the Pentateuch and in the whole Old Testament (with the exception of one chapter of the apocryphal Daniel) which clearly define the conception of the Jews' concerning life in general and the eternal life. Life in itself is, according to the conception of the Jews, eternal, and such it is in God; but man is always mortal, such being his property.

Nowhere in the Old Testament is there anything said of what we are taught in sacred histories, that God breathed an immortal soul into man, or that the first man was immortal before his fall. God created man, according to the first account in Gen. i. 26, just like the animals, just like male and female, and just as he enjoined them to fructify and multiply. As it does not say of the animals that they are immortal, so it does not say so of man. In the second chapter we hear how man learned of good and evil; but concerning life it says openly that God drove man out of paradise and barred his way to the tree of life. Man did not get a chance to eat of the tree of life, did not get *khaye-olam*, that is, the eternal life, but remained mortal.

According to the teaching of the Jews man is precisely as he is, that is, mortal. Life is in him only as life which is preserved from generation to generation in the nation. The nation only has in itself the possibility of life. When God says, You shall live and not die, he says that of the nation. The life which God breathed into man is mortal for every individual man: but this life is continued from generation to generation, if men fulfil the covenant with God, that is, the conditions which are laid down for the purpose by God.

After expounding all the laws, and saying that these laws are not in heaven, but in their hearts, Moses says in Deut. xxx. 15 and 16: See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil, commanding you to love God and walk his ways, keeping his law, that you may retain life. And Verses 19 and 20: I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him (for he is thy life, and the length of thy days).

The chief distinction between our conception of the human life and that of the Jews consists in this, that according to our conceptions our mortal life, which passes from generation to generation, is not the real life, but a fallen life, which for some reason is temporarily corrupted; but according to the conception of the Jews, this life is real, and the highest good is given to man under the condition of fulfilling God's will. From our standpoint the transition of this fallen life from generation to generation is a continuation of the curse. From the standpoint of the Jews it is the highest good which man can obtain, and that, too, only by fulfilling the will of God.

It is on this conception of life that Christ bases his teaching of the true, or eternal, life, which he opposes to the personal and mortal life. Search the Scriptures, Christ says to the Jews (John v. 39), for through them you think you have eternal life.

A young man asks Christ (Matt. xix. 16) how he may have eternal life. In replying to his question about the eternal life, Christ says, If thou wilt enter into life (he does not say *eternal life*, but simply *life*) keep the commandments. The same he says to the lawyer (Luke x. 28): This do, and thou shalt live, and again he says live, and not live for ever. In either case Christ defines what is to be understood by the words *eternal life;* whenever he uses these words, he tells the Jews what is several times said in their law, namely: the fulfilment of the will of God is the eternal life.

In opposition to the temporal, private, personal life Christ teaches that eternal life which God, according to Deuteronomy, promised to Israel, but with this difference that, according to the conception of the Jews, the eternal life was continued only in the chosen people of Israel, and that to obtain this life it was only necessary to keep God's exclusive laws for the Israelites, while, according to Christ's teaching, the eternal life is continued in the son of man, and for its preservation we must observe the laws of Christ, which express the will of God for all humanity.

Christ opposes to the personal life not the life beyond the grave, but the general life, which is united with the present, past, and future life of all humanity, — the life of the son of man.

The salvation of the personal life from death was, according to the teaching of the Jews, the fulfilment of the will of God, as expressed in the law of Moses according to his commandments. Only under these conditions did the life of the Jews not perish, but passed from generation to generation in the nation chosen by God. The salvation of the personal life from death is, according to Christ's teaching, the same fulfilment of God's will, as expressed in Christ's commandments. Only under this condition, according to Christ's teaching, does the personal life not perish, but become imperturbably eternal in the son of man. The difference is only this, that the service of the God of Moses was the service of God by one nation, while the service of the Father of Christ was the service of God by all men. The continuation of life in the generations of one nation was doubtful, because the nation itself might perish, and, also, because this continuation depended on carnal posterity. The continuation of life, according to Christ's teaching, is transferred into the son of God, who lives according to the will of the Father.

But let us suppose that the words of Christ about the terrible judgment and the end of the world, and the other words in the Gospel of John, have the meaning of promising a life beyond the grave to the souls of dead persons, it is still unquestionable that his teaching concerning the light of life, the kingdom of God, has also this other meaning, intelligible to his hearers and now to us, that the true life is only the life of the son of man according to the will of the Father. This can be admitted the more easily since the teaching concerning the true life according to the will of the Father of life includes the conception of the immortality and the life beyond the grave.

It may be more correct to assume that after this worldly life, which is lived for the fulfilment of his personal will, man will none the less receive an eternal personal life in heaven with all the possible joys; may be this is more correct, but thinking that it is so, trying to believe that for good deeds I shall be rewarded with eternal bliss, and for bad deeds with eternal torments, — thinking thus does not help me in the comprehension of Christ's teaching; thinking thus means, on the contrary, depriving Christ's teaching of its chief foundation.

The whole teaching of Christ consists in this, that his disciples, having comprehended the phantasmal nature of the personal life, should renounce it and transfer it into the life of all humanity, into the life of the son of man. But the teaching of the immortality of the personal life not only does not call for the renunciation of a man's personal life, but for ever confirms this personality.

According to the conceptions of the Jews, the Chinese, the Hindoos, and all men who do not believe in the dogma of the fall of man and his redemption, life is life, such as it is. Man copulates, begets children, brings them up, grows old, and dies. His children grow up and continue his life, which is carried on without interruption from generation to generation, just as everything in the world is carried on, — stones, earth, metals, plants, animals, the luminaries, and everything in the world. Life is life, and we must make use of it in the best manner possible. It is irrational to live for oneself. And so, ever since men have existed, they have been seeking an aim for life outside themselves: they live for their babe, for their family, for the nation, for humanity, for everything which does not die with the personal life.

On the contrary, according to the teaching of our church, human life, as the highest good known to us, presents itself only as a particle of that life which is kept from us but for a little while. Our life, according to our conception, is not the life which God wanted and ought to have given us, but a corrupt, bad, fallen life, a "sample" of life, a slur on the real life, the one which we for some reason imagine God ought to have given us. According to this representation the chief problem of our life does not consist in passing the mortal life given to us in the way in which the giver of life wants it passed, not in making it eternal in the generations of men, as the Jews teach, or by uniting it with the will of the Father, as Christ taught, but in assuring ourselves that after this life the real life will begin.

Christ does not speak of this our putative life, which God ought to have given to men, but for some reason failed to give. The theory of the fall of Adam and of the eternal life in paradise and of the immortal soul breathed by God into Adam, was unknown to Christ, and he did not mention it and did not hint at its existence with even one word.

Christ speaks of life, such as it is and as it will always be; but we speak of the life which we imagine, and which has never existed: how can we help understanding Christ's teaching?

Christ could not even have imagined such a strange conception in his disciples. He assumes that all men understand the inevitableness of the destruction of the personal life, and reveals the imperishable life. He gives the good to those who are in evil; but to those who are persuaded that they have much more than what Christ can give them, his teaching can give nothing. I will admonish a man to work, assuring him that he will receive food and raiment for it, and suddenly this man will persuade himself that he is a millionaire as it is; it is evident that he will not accept my admonition. The same takes place with Christ's teaching. Why should I work, since I can be a rich man as it is? Why should I try to live this life in godly fashion, since I am convinced that without it I shall live a personal life for ever?

We are taught that Christ saved men by this, that he is the second person of the Trinity, that he is God and became incarnate, and that, having taken upon himself the sin of Adam and of all men, he redeemed the sin of men before the first person of the Trinity and established the church and the sacraments for our salvation. If we believe in this, we are saved and receive an eternal personal life beyond the grave. But it cannot be denied that he has saved men also by this, that, by pointing out their inevitable destruction, he, according to his words, I am the way, the life, and the truth, gave us the true way of life, in lieu of that false way of the personal life on which we travelled before.

Though men may be found who will have their doubts in the life beyond the grave and in the salvation which is based on the redemption, there can be no doubt in the salvation of men, of all together and each separately, in the indication of the inevitable destruction of the personal life and of the true way of salvation in the union of our will with the will of the Father. Let every rational man ask himself what his life and death are? And let him ascribe to this life and death any other meaning than the one which Christ has pointed out.

All theorizing on the meaning of the personal life which is not based on the renunciation of self for the purpose of serving men, humanity, the son of man, is a phantom which is dispersed at the first touch of reason. I can no longer doubt that my personal life perishes, but the life of the whole world according to the will of the Father does not perish, and only a union with it gives me the possibility of salvation. But this is so little in comparison with those exalted religious beliefs in a future life! Though it is little, it is correct.

I have lost my way in a snow-storm. One assures me, and he actually thinks so, that there they are, lights and a village; but this only seems so to him and to me, because we want it; we walked in the direction of the lights, but there were none. Another man walked over the snow; he came out on a road, and shouted to us: "Do not go anywhere, for the lights are only in your eyes; you will be lost everywhere and will perish, but here is a firm road, and I am standing on it: it will take us somewhere." That is very little. When we believed the lights which glimmered in our inflamed eyes, the village was oh! so near, and there was a warm hut, and salvation, and rest; but now there is only a firm road. But if we listen to the first man, we shall certainly freeze to death, and if we listen to the second man, we shall certainly come out all right.

So what must I do, if I am the only one who understands Christ's teaching and believe in it, I alone amidst those who do not understand it or fulfil it?

What shall I do? Shall I live like all the rest, or according to Christ's teaching? I understand Christ's teaching in its commandments, and I see that their observance gives bliss to me and to all men of the world. I understand that the keeping of these commandments is the will of that beginning of all, from which my life also comes.

I understand, besides, that no matter what I may do. I shall inevitably perish in a senseless life and death. together with all that surrounds me, if I shall not fulfil this will of the Father, and that the only possibility of salvation lies only in its execution.

If I do like all men, I certainly counteract the good of all men, certainly do what is contrary to the will of the Father of life, certainly deprive myself of the only possibility of improving my desperate condition. In doing what Christ teaches me I continue to do what men have done for me: I coöperate with the good of all men who live now and who will live after me, and I do what he who has produced me wants me to do, and what alone can save me.

The circus in Berdíchev is on fire; all crowd and choke each other, pressing against the door which opens inward. A saviour appears, saying: "Step aside from the door: Go back! The more you crowd, the less hope of salvation you have. Turn back, and you will find an exit and salvation." Whether many or I alone heard it, what difference does it make? But having heard it and believing it, I can do nothing but go back and call out loud in the name of the saviour. They will, perhaps, choke me to death, or kill me; but my salvation still lies in going where there is the only exit. I cannot help but go there. The saviour must indeed be a saviour, that is, he must indeed save. And the salvation of Christ is indeed a salvation. He made his appearance and spoke, and humanity is saved.

The circus has been on fire for an hour, and we have to be in a hurry, and men may fail to be saved. But the world has been burning for eighteen hundred years, ever since Christ said, I have brought the fire down upon earth, and how my soul pines until it burns up, — and it will burn until men will be saved. Are there not men, and does it not burn, in order that men may have the bliss of salvation?

Having comprehended this, I understood and believed that Jesus was not only the Messiah, Christ, but also indeed the saviour of the world.

I know that there is no other way out for me, or for all those who with me are tormented in this life. I know that for all, and for me with them, there is no other salvation than by keeping the commandments of Christ, which give to all humanity a good which is most accessible to my understanding.

I am not terrified by the reflection that I may have more unpleasantnesses, or shall die earlier, by fulfilling Christ's teaching. This may be terrible to him who does not see how senseless and pernicious his own personal single life is, and who thinks that he will not die. But I know that my life for a personal lonely life is the greatest foolishness, and that after this foolish life I shall certainly die as foolishly. And so I cannot be terrified at all. I shall die like all men, even like those who do not fulfil the teaching: but my life and death will have a meaning for me and for all men. My life and my death will serve the salvation and the life of all men, and it is this that Christ taught.

IX.

If all men were to fulfil Christ's teaching, there would be the kingdom of God upon earth: if I alone fulfil it, I shall do the best for all and for myself. Without the fulfilment of Christ's teaching there is no salvation.

But where shall I take faith to fulfil it, always to follow it, and never to renounce it? I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief.

The disciples asked Christ to confirm faith in them. I want to do good, and I do evil, says Paul the Apostle.

It is hard to be saved, — so people generally speak and think.

A man is drowning, and he asks to be saved. A rope is thrown out to him, and he may save himself by it; but the drowning man says, Confirm the faith in me that the rope will save me. I believe, says the man, that the rope will save me, but help my unbelief.

What does this mean? If a man does not grasp that which saves him, it means only that the man has not comprehended his situation.

How can a Christian, who professes the divinity of Christ and of his teaching, no matter how he may understand it, say that he wants to believe, and cannot? God himself, coming down upon earth, said, Eternal torments, fire, eternal outer darkness await you, and your salvation is in my teaching and its fulfilment. Such a Christian cannot help but believe in the salvation offered him, and fulfil it, saying, Help my unbelief.

In order that a man may be able to say so, he must not only refrain from believing in his destruction, but must also believe that he will not perish.

Children jump from a ship into the water. The current, their dry clothes, and their feeble motions still bear them up, and they do not understand their ruin. A rope is thrown out to them from the fleeing ship. They are told that they will certainly drown, and the people on the ship implore them (parables of the woman who found a farthing, of the shepherd who found the sheep gone astray, of the prodigal son, speak of the same); but the children do not believe them. They fail to believe, not in the rope, but in their destruction. Just such frivolous children, as they are, convince them that they would have a pleasant swim, even if the ship got away from them. The children do not believe that soon their clothes will be soaked through, their arms get tired of swimming, and they will strangle and drown and go to the bottom. They do not believe in this, and for this reason alone do not believe in the rope of salvation.

Just as the children who fell down from the ship are convinced that they will not perish, and so do not take hold of the rope, so people who profess the immortality of the soul are convinced that they will not perish, and so do not fulfil the teaching of Christ the God. They do not believe in what one cannot fail to believe, only because they believe in what one cannot believe.

And so they call out to some one, Confirm in us our faith that we shall not perish.

But that cannot be done. In order that they may have faith in this, that they will not perish, they must cease doing what destroys them, and must begin to do what saves them: they must take hold of the rope of salvation. They do not wish to do so, but want to convince themselves that they will not perish, despite the fact that their companions are perishing one after the other in their sight. This desire to assure themselves of what does not exist they call faith. Naturally they have always too little faith and want to have more.

When I comprehended Christ's teaching, I understood also that that which these people called faith was not faith, and that it was that same false faith that James the Apostle rejected in his epistle. (This epistle was for a long time not accepted by the church, and when it was accepted, it was subjected to some distortions: certain words were thrown out and others transposed or wrongly translated. I leave the accepted translation, correcting a few inexactnesses according to Tischendorf's text.)

James ii. 14-24, 26. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man thinks he hath faith, and have not works? Faith cannot save him. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Ye see then how that by works a man becomes righteous and not by faith only. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James says that the only sign of faith is works which result from it, and that, therefore, faith from which works do not result is only words with which one can no more become righteous and save oneself, than one can feed on them. And so faith from which works do not result is not faith: it is only a desire to believe in something; it is only a faulty affirmation in words that I believe in that in which I do not believe.

Faith, according to this definition, is that which co-operates with works, and work is that which makes faith perfect, that is, which makes faith to be faith.

The Jews say to Christ (John vi. 30): What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

The same he was told when he was on the cross (Mark xv. 32): Let him descend from the cross, that we may see and believe.

Matt. xxvii. 42. He saved others: himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

To such a demand for the increasing of their faith Christ replies only that their wish is vain, and that it is impossible to make them believe in what they do not believe. He says (Luke xxii. 67), If I tell you, ye will not believe. John x. 25–26: I told you, and ye believed not; but ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

The Jews ask the same that the church Christians ask, something that will make them in an external way believe in Christ's teaching. And he replies to them that this is impossible, and explains to them why it is impossible. He says that they cannot believe, because they are not of his sheep, that is, do not follow the way of life which he showed his sheep. He explains (John v. 44) wherein the difference is between his sheep and others, why some believe, and others not, and on what faith is based. How can ye believe, he says, when you receive *δόξα*,[1] the teaching, from one another, but seek not the teaching that cometh from God only?

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[1] As in many other places. δόξα is quite incorrectly translated by the word *honour* or *glory; δόξα*, from δοκέω, means *conception, judgment, teaching. — Author's Note.*

To believe, says Christ, we must seek the teaching which is from God only. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his personal teaching (*δόξαν τὴν ἴδιαν*): but he that seeketh his teaching that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him (John vii. 18).

The teaching concerning life (*δόξα*) is the foundation of faith. All acts result from faith: but all faiths result from the meaning (*δόξα*) which we ascribe to life. There can be an endless number of acts, and so there can be a very large number of faiths; but there can be but two teachings concerning life (*δόξα*): one of them rejects, the other accepts Christ. One teaching, the one which Christ denies, consists in this, that the personal life is something actually existing and belonging to man. It is the teaching to which the majority of men have adhered, and from which result all the various beliefs of men and all their acts. The other teaching is the one which all the prophets and Christ preached, namely, that our personal life receives a meaning only in the execution of God's will.

If a man has that *δόξα* that his personality is more important than anything, he will think that his personal good is the most important and desirable thing in life, and, according to whether he will assume his good to be in the acquisition of property, or in reputation, or glory, or the gratification of his lust, and so forth, he will have a faith corresponding to this view, and all his acts will be in conformity with it.

If man has another *δόξα*, if he understands life in such a way that its meaning is only in the execution of God's will, as Abraham understood it and Christ taught, then, according to what he will put the will of God in, he will have a faith in conformity with this view, and all his acts will always harmonize with it.

This is the reason why believers in the good of the personal life cannot believe in Christ's teaching. All their attempts at believing this will ever remain vain. In order that they may believe, they must change their view of life. So long as they have not changed it, their works will always coincide with their faith, and not with their wishes and words.

The desire to believe in Christ's teaching, expressed by those who asked him for signs, and by our believers, does not coincide, and cannot coincide, with their lives, no matter how much they may try. They may pray to Christ the God, go to communion, do works of philanthropy, build churches, convert others, — they do all that, — but they cannot do the works of Christ, because these spring from faith, which is based on an entirely different doctrine (δόξα) than the one which they profess. They cannot sacrifice their only son, as Abraham did, who did not even stop to think whether he should sacrifice his son or not to God, to that God who alone gave a meaning and the good to his life. Even so Christ and his disciples could not help but sacrifice their lives to others, because in this alone did the meaning and the good of their lives lie. From this lack of comprehension of the essence of faith springs that strange wish of people, which is, that they may believe that it is better to live according to the teaching of Christ, whereas with all the powers of their soul they wish, in harmony with their faith in the good of the personal lives, to live contrary to this teaching.

The foundation of faith is the meaning of life, from which flows the valuation of what is important and good in life, and of what is not important and bad. The valuation of all the phenomena of life is faith. And as now people, having faith which is based on their teaching, are positively unable to harmonize it with the faith which springs from Christ's teaching, even so his disciples were unable to do so. This perplexity is several times sharply and clearly expressed in the Gospel. Christ's disciples several times begged him to confirm their faith in what he said: Matt. xx. 20–28 and Mark x. 35–45. According to either gospel, after the words which are terrible for every believer in the personal life, who assumes the good to lie in the riches of the world, and after the words that the rich man will not enter into the kingdom of God, and after the words, which are still more terrible for those who believe in nothing but the personal life, about this, that he who will not give up everything and his life for the sake of Christ's teaching will not be saved, Peter asks, What shall we have for having followed thee, and given up everything? Then, according to Mark, James and John themselves, and according to Matthew their mother, ask him to grant them that they may sit on both sides of him when he shall be in his glory. They ask him to confirm their faith by a promise of a reward.

To Peter's question Jesus replies with a parable about the labourers of the vineyard who are hired at different times (Matt. xx. 1–16); but in reply to James's request he says, Ye know not what ye ask, that is, you ask for the impossible. The teaching is in the renunciation of the personal life, and you ask for personal glory, personal reward. You can drink the same cup (pass your life) that I drink, but no one can make you sit on the right and on the left of me, that is, equal with me. And then Christ says, Only in the worldly life do the strong of the world enjoy and acclaim the glory and power of the personal life; but you, my disciples, must know that the meaning of human life is not in personal happiness, but in serving all, in the humiliation in the sight of all. Man does not live to be ministered unto, but to minister and lay down his personal life, as a ransom for all. In reply to the demand of the disciples, which showed him their entire lack of comprehension of his teaching, Christ does not command them to believe, that is, to change that valuation of the goods and evils of life, which results from their teaching (he knows that this is impossible), but explains to them that meaning of life on which faith is based, that is, the true valuation of what is good and what bad, what important and what not.

In reply to Peter's question (Mark x. 28), What shall we get for our sacrifices? Christ tells the parable of the labourers who were hired at different times and yet received the same reward. Christ explains to Peter his wrong comprehension of the teaching, on which depends the absence of his faith. Christ says, Only in the personal and senseless life do people esteem and treasure the reward for work in proportion with the work. The faith in the reward for the work in proportion with the work springs from the teaching about the personal life. This faith is based on the assumption of certain rights which we are supposed to have to something; but man has no rights to anything, and he can have none; he has only obligations in return for the good which is given him, and so he cannot measure himself with any one. Even if he gives his whole life, he is unable to give back that which is given him, and so the master cannot be unjust to him. But if a man proclaims his rights to his life and asserts them in respect to the beginning of everything which has given him life, he only shows by this that he does not understand the meaning of life.

Having received their happiness, men demand something more. These men were standing without work in the market-place, and were unhappy, — they did not live. The master took them and gave them the highest happiness of life, — work. They accepted the master's kindness, and then remained dissatisfied. They are dissatisfied because they lack a clear comprehension of their situation. They came to their work with their false teaching as to their having a right to their life and their labour, and that, therefore, their labour ought to be rewarded. They do not understand that this labour is the highest good which is given them and for which they must only try to return a similar good, and cannot demand any reward.

And so people who have the same perverse opinion of life that these labourers have cannot possess the correct and true faith.

The parable of the master and the labourer who came from the field, which is told in reply to the direct request of the disciples that he confirm and increase their faith, more clearly defines the foundation of that faith which Christ teaches.

(Luke xvii. 3–10). In reply to Christ's words that we must forgive our brother not once but seventy times seven times, the disciples, frightened at the difficulty of executing this rule, say, Yes, but it is necessary to believe in order to execute this: so confirm and increase our faith. As before they asked what they would get for it, so now they ask the same that all so-called Christians ask: I want to believe, but I cannot; confirm our faith that the rope of salvation will save us. Some say, Grant us that we should believe, — precisely what the Jews said to him when they demanded miracles of him. Make it possible for us, by means of miracles and promises of rewards, to believe in our salvation.

The disciples speak as we speak, It would be nice, if we, living that lonely, peculiar life which we are living, could be made to believe also this, that if we shall fulfil God's teaching, it will be better for us. We all utter this demand, which is contrary to the whole meaning of Christ's teaching, and wonder why we cannot believe.

And to this radical misconception, which existed then even as it exists now, he answers with a parable, in which he shows what the true faith is. Faith cannot result from a trust in what he may say; faith results only from the consciousness of one's position. Faith is based only on the rational consciousness of what it is better to do when one finds oneself in a certain position. He shows that it is not possible to rouse this faith in other people by the promise of rewards and by the threat of punishment; that this would be a very weak trust, which would be destroyed with the first temptation; that the faith which moves mountains, which no one can shake, is based on the consciousness of the inevitable ruin and on that one salvation which is possible in this situation.

In order that we may have faith, we do not need any promise of rewards. It must be understood that the only salvation from the inevitable destruction of life is that which in the will of the master is the common life. Every one who has come to understand this will not seek a confirmation, but will be saved without any admonitions.

In reply to the request of the disciples to confirm them in their faith, Christ says, When the master comes with the servant from the field, he does not tell him to sit down to eat, but orders him to put away the cattle and serve him, and then only does the labourer sit down at the table and eat his dinner. The labourer does all this and does not consider himself offended, and he does not boast and ask thanks or a reward, but knows that it has to be so, and that he is only doing what is necessary, and that it is a necessary condition of his service and at the same time the true good of his life. Even so you, says Christ, when you do everything which you are commanded, must consider that you have done only what you ought to do. He who will understand his relation to the master, will understand that only by submitting to the will of the master is he able to have life, and will know in what his good lies, and will have faith for which there will be nothing impossible. It is this faith that Christ teaches. Faith, according to Christ's teaching, is based on the rational cognition of the meaning of one's life.

The foundation of faith, according to Christ's teaching, is the light.

John i. 9–12: That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

John iii. 19–21 : And this is the condemnation,[1] that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. For him who understands Christ's teaching there can be no question about confirming his faith. Faith, according to Christ's teaching, is based on the light, on truth. Christ nowhere appeals to people to believe in him; he only appeals to them to believe in the truth.

He says to the Jews (John viii. 40), But now you seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. (46) Which of you convinces me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? John xviii. 37 : To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. John xiv. 6 : He saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

In another place of the same chapter (16 and 17) he says : The Father shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever : even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him : but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

He says that his whole teaching, he himself, is the truth.

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[1] Κρίσις does not mean *condemnation*, but *division*. — *Author's Note.*

Christ's teaching is the teaching of the truth, and so Christ's faith is not trust in anything, as referring to Jesus, but the knowledge of the truth. It is impossible to assure one of Christ's teaching, — it is impossible to bribe one to fulfil it. He who understands Christ's teaching will have faith in him, because his teaching is the truth. He who knows the truth which is necessary for his good cannot help but believe in it, and so a man who understands that he is actually drowning cannot help but take hold of the rope of salvation. The question as to how one should do in order that one may be able to believe is a question which only expresses the lack of conception of the teaching of Jesus Christ.

X.

We say that it is hard to live according to Christ's teaching. How can it help being hard since we ourselves with all our life cautiously conceal from ourselves our situation, and carefully confirm in ourselves the confidence in this, that our situation is not what it is, but something quite different? And this confidence, by calling it faith, we exalt to something sacred, and with all possible means — with force, with acting upon the feelings, with threats, with flattery, with deceit — entice men to this false trust. In this demand of a trust in what is impossible and irrational we reach a point where the very irrationality of that which we demand shall be trusted is taken by us as a sign of its truth. A man was found who, being a Christian, said, *Credo quia absurdum*, and all the other Christians repeat this with raptures, assuming that insipidity is the best means for teaching the truth to men. Lately, in a conversation with me, a learned and clever man said to me that the Christian teaching as a moral teaching about life was not important. "All this," he said to me, "will be found with the Stoics, with the Brahmins, in the Talmud. The essence of the Christian teaching is not in this, but in the theosophical teaching which is expressed in the dogmas." That is, not that is of any value to the Christian teaching which is eternal and universally human, which is needed for life and is rational, but that is important and precious in Christianity which is entirely incomprehensible and, therefore, unnecessary, and that in the name of which millions of men have been killed.

We have formed for ourselves a false representation of our life and of that of the world, and this is based on nothing but our malice and personal lusts; and the faith in this false representation, which is externally connected with the teaching of Christ, we consider most necessary and important for life. If it were not for this trust in the lie, which men have maintained through the ages, the lie of our conception of life and the truth of Christ's teaching would have been made manifest long ago.

It is terrible to say so (it so seems to me at times), but, if the teaching of Christ with the ecclesiastical teaching which has grown up on it did not exist at all, those who are now called Christians would be much nearer to the teaching of Christ, that is, to the rational teaching about the good of life, than they are now. The moral teachings of the prophets of all humanity would not be concealed from them. They would have their little prophets of truth, whom they would believe. But as it is, the whole truth is revealed, and this truth has appeared so terrible to those whose deeds are evil, that they have transformed it into a lie, and men have lost confidence in the truth. In our European society, Christ's declaration that he came into the world to bear witness of the truth, and that, therefore, every one who is of the truth hears him, has long ago been met with Pilate's words, What is the truth? These words, which express such a sad and deep irony against one Roman, we have taken as the truth and have made them our faith. All in our society live, not only without the truth, not only without any desire to know it, but even with the firm assurance that of all vain occupations the vainest is the seeking of the truth that determines human life.

The teaching about life — what with all the nations previous to our European society was always regarded as most important, what Christ declared to be the one thing needed — is the only one to be excluded from our life and from all human activity. This is the business of the institution which is called the church, and no one, not even those who form this institution, has believed in it for a long time.

The one window for the light, toward which the eyes of all thinking and suffering people are directed, is screened. To the question, What am I? what shall I do? can I not alleviate my life in accordance with the teaching of that God who, as you say, came to save us? I am told: Execute the injunctions of the authorities, and believe in the church. But why do we live so wretchedly in this world? asks a despairing voice: What is all this evil for? Is it possible I cannot avoid participating with my body in this evil? The answer is, No, your desire to pass your life well and to help others to do so is pride. There is one thing you can do, and that is, to save yourself, your soul, for the future life. But if you do not wish to take part in the evil of the world, go out of it. This way is open to all, says the teaching of the church, but know that, in choosing this path, you must no longer take part in the life of the world, but must stop living and slowly kill yourself. There are but two ways, our teachers tell us, and those are, to believe and obey us and the authorities, and to participate in the evil which we have instituted, or to go out of the world and into a monastery, to watch and to fast; or to let your flesh rot on a pillar, to bend and unbend your body and do nothing for men; or to acknowledge Christ's teaching impracticable and so to acknowledge the lawlessness of life as sanctified by religion; or to renounce life, which is tantamount to a slow suicide.

No matter how remarkable to a man who understands the teaching of Christ appears the error which assumes that Christ's teaching is very good for men, but impracticable, — the error which assumes that a man who wishes to fulfil Christ's teaching with works, and not with words, must go out of the world, seems more remarkable still.

The delusion that it is better for a man to retire from the world than to subject himself to the temptations of the world is an old error which has been long known to the Jews, but which is entirely foreign, not only to the spirit of Christianity, but even to Judaism. Against this delusion the story of the prophet Jonah, which Christ liked so much and adduced so often, was written long before his time. The thought of this story is the same from beginning to end: Jonah the prophet wants himself to be just and removes himself from the corrupt people. But God shows him that he is a prophet and is wanted for nothing else than that he should announce his knowledge of the truth to people who have gone astray, and so must not run away from these erring people, but must live in communion with them. Jonah has contempt for the corrupt Ninevites and runs away from them; but, no matter how much Jonah runs away from his vocation, God brings him back to the Ninevites by means of the whale, and what God wishes is accomplished, that is, the Ninevites receive through Jonah God's teaching, and their life is improved. But Jonah is by no means glad to be the tool of God's will: he is annoyed, he is jealous of God in respect to the Ninevites, — he would like to be the only rational and good man. He retires to the wilderness, laments his fate, and murmurs against God. Then a gourd grows out in one night, to defend him against the sun, and the following night a worm devours this gourd. Jonah rebukes God more than ever, because his precious gourd has perished. Then God says to him, Thou art sorry for the gourd, which thou callest thy own, and which grew up in one night and disappeared in one night, and am I not sorry for the great multitude that perished, that multitude that live like animals, and are unable to discern between their right hand and their left hand? Thy knowledge of the truth was wanted even for this, that thou mightest transmit it to those who did not have it.

Christ knew this story and frequently quoted it, but, in addition to this, it tells in the gospels how, after the visit of John the Baptist, who retired to the wilderness, Christ, before the beginning of his preaching, was subjected to the same temptation, and how he was led by the devil (deception) into the wilderness in order to be tempted, and how he vanquished this deception and returned to Galilee in the strength of his spirit, and how, no longer contemning corrupt people, he after that passed his life among publicans, Pharisees, and sinners, teaching them the truth.[1]

According to the church teaching Christ the God-man has given us an example of life. All his known life Christ passes in the whirlpool of life, — with publicans, with harlots, in Jerusalem, with the Pharisees. The chief commandments of Christ are the love of one's neighbour and the preaching of his teaching to others. Both demand a constant communion with the world. Suddenly the conclusion is drawn from this, that, according to Christ's teaching, it is necessary to go away from all men, not to have anything to do with any one, and to stand on a pillar. To follow Christ's example, it turns out that we have to do the very opposite of what he taught and did.

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[1] Luke iv. 1, 2 : Christ is led by the deception into the wilderness, in order that he may be tempted there. Matt. iv. 3, 4 : The deception says to Christ that he is not the Son of God, if he cannot make bread out of stones. Christ says, I can live without bread, — I live by what is breathed into me by God. Then the deception says, If thou livest by what is breathed into thee by God, throw thyself down from a height ; thou wilt kill the flesh, but the spirit which is breathed into thee by God will not die. Christ answers, My life in the flesh is the will of God. To kill the flesh is to go against the will of God, to tempt God. Matt. iv. 8–11 : Then the deception says, If that is so serve the flesh, like all men, and the flesh will reward thee. Christ answers, I am powerless over the flesh, — my life is in the spirit ; but I cannot destroy the flesh, because the spirit was put into me by the will of God, and so, living in the flesh, I can serve only my Father, God. And Christ goes from the wilderness back to the world. — *Author's Note.*

Christ's teaching, according to the church interpretations, presents itself, both to laymen and to the monastic orders, not as a teaching about life, — how it is to be made better for ourselves and for others, — but as a teaching of what worldly people are to believe in, in order that, living badly, they may none the less save themselves in the next world; and to the monastic orders, as to how they can make life worse than what it is.

But Christ does not teach this.

Christ teaches the truth, and if an abstract truth is a truth, it will be true even in reality. If the life in God is the one true life, blissful in itself, it is true and blissful here upon earth under all possible accidents of life. If the life here on earth did not confirm Christ's teaching about life, this teaching would be untrue.

Christ does not call people away from what is good to what is worse, but, on the contrary, to something better from what is bad. He is sorry for people, who represent themselves to him as lost sheep that are perishing without a shepherd, and promises them a shepherd and good pasturage. He says that his disciples will be persecuted for his teaching and must suffer and bear the persecutions of the world with firmness. But he does not say that, following his teaching, they will suffer more than if they followed the teaching of the world; on the contrary, he says that those who will follow the teaching of the world will be unhappy, while those who will follow his teaching will be blessed.

Christ does not teach salvation through faith, nor asceticism, that is, the deception of the imagination, nor self-imposed sufferings in this life; but he teaches that kind of a life which, in addition to the salvation from the destruction of the personal life, would offer even here, in this world, less suffering and more pleasure than in the case of the personal life.

In disclosing his teaching, Christ says to men that, by fulfilling his teaching even among those who do not fulfil it, they will not be more unfortunate thereby than they were before, but, on the contrary, happier than those who will not fulfil this. Christ says that there is a safe worldly calculation why they should not trouble themselves about the life of the world.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life. Matt. xix. 27–29; Mark x. 28–30: Luke xviii. 28–30.

It is true, Christ mentions the fact that those who will obey him will be subjected to persecutions by those who will not obey him; but he does not say that the disciples will lose anything by it. On the contrary, he says that his disciples will have here, in this world, more joys than those who are not his disciples.

There can be no doubt as to Christ's saying and thinking this, both on account of the lucidity of his words and the meaning of the whole teaching, and also from the way he lived and from the way his disciples lived. But is it the truth?

In analyzing the abstract question as to whose position will be better, that of Christ's disciples or that of the disciples of the world, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the position of Christ's disciples must be better, because Christ's disciples, doing good to all men, will not provoke enmity in men. Christ's disciples, doing no one any evil, may be persecuted by evil men only; but the disciples of the world must be persecuted by all, since the law of life of the disciples of the world is a law of struggle, that is, a persecution of one another. The accidents of suffering are indeed the same for both, but with this difference, that Christ's disciples will be prepared for them, while the disciples of the world will employ all the forces of their souls in order to avoid them, and that Christ's disciples, suffering, will think that their sufferings are needed for the world, while the disciples of the world, suffering, will not know what they are suffering for. Considering the matter in the abstract, the condition of Christ's disciples must be more advantageous than the condition of the disciples of the world. But is this so in practice?

In order to verify this, let each man recall all the difficult minutes of his life, all the bodily and spiritual sufferings which he has endured and still endures, and let him ask himself in the name of what he is enduring all these misfortunes, whether in the name of the world, or in that of Christ. Let each sincere man try and recall his whole past life, and he will see that not once did he suffer from the execution of Christ's teaching, but that the majority of the misfortunes of his life have been due to this, that, in opposition to his bent, he has followed the compulsory teaching of the world.

In my life, which is exceptionally happy from the worldly point of view, I can think of enough sufferings borne by me in the name of the teachings of the world to suffice for a good martyr in the name of Christ. All the most oppressive minutes of my life, beginning with student sprees and debauches and ending with duels, war, and that malaise and those unnatural and agonizing conditions of life, in which I now live, — all this is a torment in the name of the teaching of the world.

Yes, I am speaking only of my life, which is exceptionally happy from a worldly point of view. And how many martyrs there are who have suffered for the teaching of the world in a manner which I am not even able to present to myself!

We do not see all the difficulty and all the peril of the fulfilment of the teaching of the world simply because we think that everything we suffer for it is necessary.

We have convinced ourselves that all those misfortunes which we inflict upon ourselves are necessary conditions of our life, and so we cannot understand that Christ is teaching us precisely how we are to free ourselves from our misfortunes and live peacefully.

To be able to consider the question as to what life is happier, we must at least mentally renounce this false conception and without any preconceived notion look at ourselves and all about us.

Walk through a large crowd of people, especially in the city, and scan those emaciated, troubled, sickly faces, and then recall your own life and those men's lives the details of which you happen to have found out; recall all those violent deaths, all those suicides, which have come to your ears, and ask yourself in the name of what all these sufferings, deaths, and despairs, that lead people to commit suicide, take place. You will see, no matter how strange it may seem to you at first, that nine-tenths of the sufferings of men are borne by them in the name of the teaching of the world, that all these sufferings are unnecessary and avoidable, that the majority of men are the martyrs of the teaching of the world.

The other day, which was a rainy autumnal Sunday, I crossed the market-place of the Sukhárev Tower in a horsecar. For the distance of half a verst the car had to push aside a solid mass of people, who immediately came together again behind us. From morning until evening these thousands of people, of whom the majority are hungry and in tatters, crowd here in the mud, cursing, cheating, and despising one another. The same takes place in all the market-places of Moscow. The evening is passed by these people in inns and restaurants, and the night in their dens and corners. Sunday is their best day of the week. On Monday they will again go about their hateful work in their infected dens.

Consider the lives of all these men, the condition which they have left in order to choose the one in which they have placed themselves; consider that unceasing labour which these people — these men and these women — do wilfully, and you will see that they are true martyrs.

All these people have left their homes, their fathers, brothers, frequently wives and children, have renounced everything, even life itself, and have come to town in order to obtain that which according to the teaching of the world is considered necessary for each of them. All of these, not to speak of those tens of thousands of unfortunate men who have lost everything and live on tripes and vódka in their doss-houses, — all, from the factory hand, cab-drivers, sewing-girls, prostitutes, to the rich merchant and the minister, and their wives, — live a most oppressive and unnatural life and yet have not acquired what for them is necessary according to the teaching of the world.

Hunt among these people, and find, from a beggar to a rich man, one who has enough, with what he earns, for everything which he considers necessary according to the teaching of the world, and you will see that you will not find one in a thousand. Every one of them struggles with all his might to gain what he does not need, but what is demanded of him according to the teaching of the world and the absence of which forms his misfortune. The moment he earns what he needs, a second and a third thing will be demanded of him, and thus proceeds this endless Sisyphean labour, which ruins the lives of men.

Take the scale of incomes of people, from those who spend three hundred roubles to those who spend fifty thousand roubles a year, and you will rarely find a man who is not worn out and exhausted from working to earn four hundred roubles, when he has three hundred roubles.

and five hundred roubles, when he has four hundred roubles, and so on; and there is not one who, having five hundred roubles, would of his free will go back to the condition of him who has only four hundred roubles. If there are such examples, a man makes this change, not in order to make his life easier, but in order to collect money and put it away. They all want to burden their lives, which are heavy as it is, and to give their souls completely to the teaching of the world. To-day a man earns a coat and a pair of overshoes, to-morrow a watch with a chain, the next day an apartment with a sofa and a lamp, then carpets for the drawing-room and velvet dresses, then a house, fast horses, pictures in gold frames, then he grows sick from the work above his strength, and dies. Another continues the same work and also gives his life to that Moloch, and he, too, dies, not knowing himself why he did all this.

But, perhaps, this life itself, during which a man does all this, is happy in itself. Measure this life by what men have called happiness, and you will see that this life is dreadfully unfortunate. Indeed, what are the chief conditions of the earthly happiness, which no one would dispute?

One of the first universally acknowledged conditions of happiness is that life in which there is no violation of men's connection with Nature, that is, a life under the open sky, in the light of the sun, in the fresh air: a communion with the soil, with plants, and with animals. Men have at all times considered the deprivation of this as a great misfortune. Those who are locked up in prisons feel this deprivation most keenly.

Now, let us look at the lives of people who live according to the teaching of the world: the more success they have obtained according to the teaching of the world, the more are they deprived of this condition of happiness; the higher the worldly happiness is which they have obtained, the less do they see the sunlight, fields and forests, wild and domestic animals. Many of them — nearly all the women — live to an old age, without having seen the sun rise and the morning more than once or twice in their lifetime and without ever having seen fields and forests otherwise than from a carriage or car window, and not only without ever having sowed or planted anything, or fed and reared cows, horses, chickens, but without having even a conception as to how animals are born, grow up, and live. These people see only stuffs, stones, wood, which are worked by human labour, and that, too, not in the sunlight, but under an artificial illumination; they hear only the sounds of machines, carriages, guns, musical instruments; they smell perfumes and tobacco smoke; under their feet and hands are nothing but stuffs, stones, and wood; on account of the weakness of their stomachs they generally eat what is not fresh, and what stinks. Their migrations from place to place do not save them from this deprivation. They travel in closed boxes. In the country and abroad, whither they journey, they have the same stuffs and the same wood under their feet, the same curtains which conceal from them the sunlight, the same lackeys, coachmen, janitors, who do not permit them to commune with the soil, the plants, and the animals. No matter where they may be, they are like prisoners, deprived of this condition of happiness. As prisoners take delight in the grass which sprouts in the prison yard, or in a spider, in a mouse, so these people now and then take delight in sickly house-plants, a parrot, a little dog, a monkey, whom, however, somebody else looks after.

Another unquestionable condition of happiness is work, in the first place, favourite and free work, in the second, physical work, which gives appetite and sound, soothing sleep. Again, the greater the happiness, as they understand it, which people have obtained according to the teaching of the world, the more they are deprived of this second condition of happiness. All the fortunate people of the world — dignitaries and rich people — are either, like prisoners, entirely deprived of work and unsuccessfully struggle against diseases which are the result of an absence of physical labour, and still more unsuccessfully against ennui which assails them (I say unsuccessfully, because work is a joy only when it is absolutely necessary, whereas nothing is necessary to them), or work at some hateful work, as is the case with bankers, prosecuting attorneys, governors, ministers, and their wives, who fix up drawing-rooms, china, and dresses for themselves and their children. (I say hateful, because I have never yet met one among them who praised his work and did it with the same pleasure with which a janitor cleans the snow away in front of a house.) All these happy people are either deprived of work, or are made to do work they do not like, that is, they find themselves in the condition in which criminals at hard labour are.

A third unquestionable condition of happiness is the family. And here again, this happiness is the less accessible to them the more they advance in worldly success. The majority are adulterers and consciously renounce the domestic joys, submitting to their inconveniences alone. If they are not adulterers, children are not a joy to them, but an impediment, and they of their own free will deprive themselves of them, trying in every way possible, sometimes by most painful means, to make their cohabitation sterile. And if they have children, they are deprived of the pleasure of communing with them. According to their laws, they must give them in charge of others, for the most part entire strangers, at first foreigners, and then state educators, so that a family causes them nothing but sorrow, — the children become just as unfortunate, from their childhood, as their parents are, and the children have but one wish toward them, and that is, that they may die soon and leave them an inheritance.[1] They are not locked up in a prison; but the consequences to their life in relation to the family is more tormenting than the deprivation of family, to which prisoners are subjected.

A fourth condition of happiness is a free and amicable communion with all the various men of the world. Here, again, the higher the level which people have reached in the world, the more they are deprived of this chief condition of happiness. The higher, the narrower that circle of men is with whom communion is possible, the lower is the mental and moral development of those few men who form the magic circle, from which there is no way out. For a peasant and his wife social intercourse is open with the whole world, and if one million of people do not want to have anything to do with him, he still has eighty millions of men working like him, from Arkhángelsk to Ástrakhan, with whom he enters at once into close, brotherly relations, without waiting for an introduction or a visit. For an official and his wife there are hundreds like him, but his superiors do not admit him, and his inferiors are cut off from him. For a worldly rich man and his wife there are dozens of worldly families. Everything else is cut off from them. For a minister and a nabob and their families there exists a dozen such families as they are.

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[1] Very strange is the justification of life which one frequently hears from parents. "I need nothing," says a parent, "life is a burden to me, but, as I love my children I do this for their sake." That is, I know indubitably from experience that our life is unhappy, and so — I educate my children in such a way that they may be just as unhappy as I am. And so, loving them, I inoculate them with the physical and moral infection of the cities, give them into the hands of strangers, who have only a selfish purpose in education, and carefully ruin my children physically and morally. This reflection is to serve as a justification of the insensate life of the parents themselves! — *Author's Note.*

For emperors and kings the circle becomes narrower still. Is not this an imprisonment, where the incarcerated person has social intercourse with but two or three fellow prisoners?

Finally, a fifth condition of happiness is health and painless death. Here again the higher men stand on the social ladder, the more they are deprived of this condition of happiness. Take an average rich man and his wife and an average peasant and his wife, in spite of all the starvation and the labour beyond their strength, which the peasant people endure not through their fault, but through the cruelty of men, and compare them. You will see that the lower the men and women stand, the healthier they are, and the higher, the more sickly they are.

Pass in review all those rich men and their wives whom you have known, and you will find that the majority of them are sick. Among them a healthy man, who is not undergoing some cure all the time, or periodically in the summer, is as much an exception as a sick person among the labouring classes. All these fortunate people, without exception, begin with onanism, which in their existence has become a natural condition of development: they all become toothless and gray and bald-headed in those years when a working person enters into full power. Nearly all of them are a prey to nervous, stomachic, or sexual diseases from gluttony, drunkenness, debauch, and doctoring, and those who do not die young pass half their life in undergoing some cures, in having morphine injected into them, or as puffed-up cripples who are incapable of living on their means, but can exist only as parasites, or as those ants whom their slaves feed. Pass their manner of dying in review: one committed suicide, another rotted away from syphilis, a third died as an old man from a tonic, a fourth died young from flagellation to which he subjected himself for the sake of excitation;

one was eaten up alive by lice or by worms, another drank himself or ate himself to death, still another was killed by morphine, or from an artificial abortion. One after the other they perish in the name of the teaching of the world. And the crowds pack after them, and, like martyrs, they seek sufferings and ruin.

One life after another is thrown under the chariot of this god: the chariot passes along, lacerating these lives, and new, ever new, victims throw themselves under it with groans, and sighs, and curses!

The execution of Christ's teaching is difficult. Christ says, Let those who want to follow leave house, fields, and brothers, and follow me, the God, and they will receive a hundred times more houses, fields, and brothers, and, besides, the eternal life. And nobody follows him. But in the teaching of the world it says: Abandon house, field, and brothers, leave the village for the rotten city, live all your life as a naked bath-house attendant, lathering other people's backs in the hot steam; or as a huckster, all your life counting other people's money in a basement; or as a prosecuting attorney, passing all your life in court and over papers, busy making worse the fate of unfortunates; or as a minister, all your life in a hurry to sign useless documents; or as a general, all your life killing people, — live this monstrous life, which always ends in agonizing death, and you will receive nothing in this world, and you will have no eternal life. And all go after them. Christ said, Take thy cross, and follow me, that is, humbly bear the fate which has befallen thee, and obey me, the God; and no one follows him. But the first useless man in epaulettes, who is no good except to commit murder, need only take it into his head to say, Take, not the cross, but the knapsack and the gun, and follow me to all kinds of suffering and eternal death, — and all follow him.

They leave their families, parents, wives, children, dress themselves in fools' clothes, subject themselves to the power of the first man they meet, who is higher in rank, and, hungry, cold, and worn out from exhausting marches, follow him somewhere like a herd of oxen going to the slaughter-house; but they are not oxen, — they are men. They cannot help but know that they are driven to a slaughter-house; with the unsolved question, "What for?" and with despair in their hearts they march, dying from cold and hunger and infectious diseases, until they are placed under bullets and shells and are commanded to kill strangers. They kill and are killed, and none of those who kill know why or for what. The Turks roast them alive over a fire, flay them, and pull out their entrails. And to-morrow some one will whistle again, and again they will all go to meet terrible sufferings, and death, and obvious evil. And nobody finds this hard. Not only those who suffer, but even fathers and mothers do not find this hard. They go so far as to advise their children to do it. It seems to them not only that this is necessary and cannot be otherwise, but even that it is good and moral.

It would be easy to believe that the execution of Christ's teaching is hard and terrible and painful, if the execution of the teaching of the world were very easy and harmless and agreeable. But the teaching of the world is much harder, much more dangerous and painful of execution than Christ's teaching.

At one time, they say, there existed martyrs of Christ, but they were the exception: with us they are counted to the number of 380,000, — both voluntary and involuntary martyrs, — for the period of eighteen hundred years. Count up the martyrs of the world, and for each martyr of Christ you will find one thousand martyrs of the teaching of the world, whose sufferings were one hundred times more terrible. For the present century alone they figure thirty millions of men killed in wars.

All these are martyrs of the teaching of the world, who needed, not to follow Christ's teaching, but only to refuse to follow the teaching of the world, and they would have been freed from suffering and death.

A man need but do what he wants to, — refuse to go to war, — and he will be sent to dig ditches, and will not be tortured to death at Sevastopol or Plevna. A man need but refuse to believe in the teaching of the world, that it is necessary to put on galoshes and a chain and to have a useless drawing-room, and that it is necessary to do all those foolish things which the teaching of the world demands of him, and he will not know that tantalizing labour, and those sufferings and eternal cares and work without rest and without aim; he will not be deprived of communion with Nature, of his favourite work, of his family, of his health, and will not senselessly die an agonizing death.

We need not be martyrs in the name of Christ, — Christ does not teach this. He teaches us to stop tormenting ourselves in the name of the false teaching of the world.

Christ's teaching has a deep metaphysical meaning; Christ's teaching has a universally human meaning; Christ's teaching has a very simple, clear, practical meaning for the life of each individual man. This meaning may be expressed as follows: Christ teaches people not to do anything foolish. In this consists the very simple, universally accessible meaning of Christ's teaching.

Christ says, Be not angry, consider no one beneath thee, — for it is foolish. If thou shalt be angry, and offend people, it will be worse for thee. Again Christ says, Do not run after women, but come together with one woman, — for that will be better for thee. Again he says, Make no promises to any one about anything, or else they will compel thee to do foolish and criminal things. Again he says, Do not repay evil with evil, or else the evil will come back to thee as a greater evil than before, like the poised beam above the honey, which kills the bear. And again he says, Do not regard people as strangers, simply because they live in another country and speak another language. If thou shalt consider them enemies, and they shall consider thee an enemy, it will only be worse for thee. And so, do none of these foolish things, and thou wilt be better off.

"Yes," people reply to this, "but the world is so constructed that it is more painful to oppose this order than to live in accordance with it. If a man should decline to do military service, he would be put into prison and perhaps be shot. If a man were not to secure his life by obtaining what is necessary for him and for his family, he and his family would starve."

Thus people speak, trying to defend the structure of the world, but they themselves do not think in this manner. They speak so only because they cannot deny the justice of the teaching of Christ, whom they profess to believe, and they have to justify themselves in some way for not fulfilling this teaching. But they do not think so, and have never thought so. They believe in the teaching of the world, and only use the excuse which the church has taught them, that in fulfilling Christ's teaching it is necessary to suffer much, and so they never even try to carry out Christ's teaching. We see endless sufferings which people endure in the name of the teaching of the world, but we never see in our time any sufferings for the sake of Christ's teaching. Thirty millions have perished in wars for the sake of the teaching of the world; thousands of millions have perished in an agonizing life in the name of the teaching of the world; but no millions, not even thousands, nor dozens, nor even one man is known to me, who died or lived an agonizing life, starving and freezing, for the sake of Christ's teaching. This is only a ridiculous excuse, which proves to what degree Christ's teaching is unknown to us. Not only do we fail to share it, but we have never taken it seriously. The church has troubled itself to explain to us Christ's teaching in such a way that it presents itself, not as a teaching of life, but as a scarecrow.

Christ calls men to the spring of water, which is here, near them. People are tormented by thirst: they eat mud and drink the blood of one another, but the teachers have told them that they will perish, if they go to the spring to which Christ is calling them. And the people believe them, and are tormented, and die of thirst within two steps of the water, without daring to approach them. But we need only believe Christ, that he brought the good down upon earth, that he gives us, who are thirsty, a spring of living water; we need only come to him, in order that we may see how tricky the deception of the church is and how senseless our sufferings are, while salvation is so near. We need only accept Christ's teaching in a straight and simple manner, in order that we may see clearly the terrible deception in which we all live.

Generation after generation we labour to provide for our life by means of violence and of property security. The happiness of our life presents itself to us as consisting of the greatest possible power and the largest amount of possessions. We are so used to this that Christ's teaching, which says that man's happiness cannot depend on power and possessions and that a rich man cannot be happy, presents itself to us as a demand for a sacrifice in the name of future benefits. But it does not even occur to Christ to demand sacrifices of us; on the contrary, he teaches us not to do what is worse, but to do what is best for us here, in this life. Christ, who loves men, teaches them to refrain from securing their lives by means of violence and of property, even as men, loving their neighbours, teach them to refrain from fighting and getting drunk. He says that, living without offering resistance to others and without possessions, men will be happier, and this he confirms by his example of life. He says that a man who lives according to his teaching must be prepared to die any moment at the hands of those who offer violence, and from cold and hunger, and cannot count on one hour of his life. And this seems to us to be a terrible demand for some sacrifices; but it is only a confirmation of those conditions under which every man lives inevitably at all times. A disciple of Christ must any minute be prepared for sufferings and death. Is not a disciple of the world in the same state?

We are so used to our deception that everything we do for the supposed security of our life — our armies, our fortresses, our supplies, our garments, our cures, all our property, our money — seems to us to be something real, which seriously secures our life. We forget what is obvious to every one, what happened to him who took it into his head to build granaries in order to secure himself for a long time: he died that very night. Everything we do to make our life secure is precisely what the ostrich does, when it stops to hide its head, in order that it may not see how it is being killed. We do worse than an ostrich: in order doubtfully to provide for a doubtful life in the doubtful future, we certainly ruin our certain life in the certain present.

The deception consists in the fallacious conviction that our life can be made secure by our struggle with other people. We are so accustomed to this deception of this supposed security of our life and of our property that we do not notice what we are losing for the sake of it. And we are losing everything, — our whole life. Our whole life is swallowed by the care of making our life secure and of preparing for it, so that nothing of life is left.

We need but for a moment renounce our habit and look at life from one side, in order that we may see that everything we do for the supposed security of our life we do not at all do in order to make our life secure, but only in order to forget, while we are busy with it, that life is never secure and cannot be made secure. And we not only deceive ourselves and lose our present life for an imaginary one, but in this striving after security we most frequently lose precisely what we want to make secure. The French armed themselves in the year 1870 in order to make their life secure, and caused the destruction of hundreds of thousands of Frenchmen; the same thing is done by all nations that arm themselves. A rich man makes his life secure by the possession of money, but this same money attracts the robber, who kills him. A suspicious man secures his life by means of a cure, and this very cure kills him slowly, or, if it does not kill him, it certainly deprives him of life, as it did that sick man who had failed to live for thirty-eight years, waiting for the angel at the pool.

Christ's teaching about this, that it is impossible to make life secure, but that one must be ready to die at any moment, is unquestionably better than the teaching of the world about the necessity of making life secure; it is better by this, that the inevitableness of death and the insecurity of life remain the same with either the teaching of the world or that of Christ, but that life itself, according to Christ's teaching, is no longer entirely absorbed without any residue in the idle occupation of an imaginary attempt at securing it: it becomes free, and can be devoted to its one proper aim, — its own good and the good of others.

A disciple of Christ will be poor. Yes, that is, he will always make use of all that good which God has given him. He will not ruin his life. We have expressed by the word "poverty" what is happiness, but the matter itself has not changed from it. When we say he will be poor, we mean that he will not be in the city, but in the country; he will not sleep at home, but will work in the woods and in the fields, and will see the sunlight, the earth, the sky, the animals; he will not trouble himself with the thought as to what he will eat in order to whet his appetite, and what to do to pass an hour, but will be hungry three times a day; he will not toss on soft pillows and wonder how he may save himself from insomnia, but will sleep; he will have children and will live with them; he will live in free communion with all people, and, above all else, will do nothing he does not like; he will not be afraid of what will become of him. He will be sick, and suffer, and die like all men (better than the rich, if we are to judge from the way the poor suffer and die), but he will live more happily. To be poor, to be a mendicant, to be a vagrant (πτωχός means a vagrant), is precisely what Christ taught, without which it is impossible to enter the kingdom of God, without which it is impossible to be happy here upon earth.

"But no one will feed you, and you will starve," people reply to this. To the retort that, living according to Christ's teaching, a man will starve, Christ replied with one short utterance (which is interpreted as a justification of the idleness of the clergy) (Matt. x. 10, Luke x. 7).

He said, Take no scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.

The labourer is worthy ἄξιός ἐστι, — word for word it means, he can and shall have his meat. This is a very brief utterance, but for him who understands it as Christ understood it there can no longer be any discussion as to this, that a man who has no property will starve. To understand this word in its actual significance, it is necessary first to reject the idea about man's bliss consisting in idleness, which, in consequence of the dogma of redemption, has become so natural to us. It is necessary to reëstablish that conception, which is characteristic of all uncorrupted people, that it is not idleness, but labour, that forms a necessary condition of man's happiness; that man cannot help but work; that it is hard and tiresome not to work, just as it is hard and tiresome for an ant, a horse, and any animal. It is necessary to forget our wild superstition that the condition of a man who has an inexhaustible dollar, that is, a government position, or the right to some land, or bonds with coupons, which make it possible for him to do nothing, is a natural, happy condition. We must reconstruct in our conception that view of labour which is held by all uncorrupted people, and which was held by Christ, when he said that the labourer was worthy of his meat. Christ could not imagine any people who would look upon work as a curse, and so he could not imagine a man who did not work, or did not want to work. He always takes it for granted that his disciple works. And so he says: If a man works, his labour supports him; and if another man takes this work to himself, he will support the labourer, even because he makes use of the labourer's work. Consequently the labourer will always have his meat. He will have no property, but there can be no question as to his support. The difference between Christ's teaching and that of our world as relating to work consists in this, that, according to the world's teaching, work is man's especial desert, in which he vies with others, and assumes that he has a right to a proportionately better support, the greater his work is; while, according to Christ's teaching, work, labour, is a necessary condition of man's life, and the support is its inevitable consequence. Work produces food, food produces work, — such is the eternal circle: one is a result and a cause of the other. No matter how evil a master may be, he will feed the labourer, even as he feeds the horse which works for him; he will feed the labourer in such a way that he can do as much work as possible, that is, he will contribute to that which forms man's good.

The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. According to Christ's teaching every individual man will have the best life, independently of what the world is, if he understands his calling, which is not to demand any work from others, but to devote his own life to work for others, to lay down his life, a ransom for many. A man who acts in this manner, says Christ, is worthy of meat, that is, he cannot help but receive it. With the words, "Man does not live to be worked for, but to work for others," Christ establishes that foundation which unquestionably secures man's material existence; and with the words, "The workman is worthy of his meat," Christ removes that usual objection to the possibility of fulfilling his teaching, which consists in this, that a man who fulfils Christ's teaching, amidst those who do not fulfil it, will perish of hunger and cold. Christ shows that a man secures his sustenance, not by taking it away from others, but by becoming useful and necessary to others. The more necessary he is to others, the more will his existence be made secure.

With the present order of things, people who do not fulfil Christ's laws, but work for their neighbour, though they have no possessions, do not starve. How, then, can one object to Christ's teaching, saying that those who fulfil his teaching, that is, who work for their neighbour, will starve? A man cannot starve so long as the rich have bread. In Russia there are millions of people, at any given moment of time, who live without any possessions, supporting themselves by their work alone.

Among the Gentiles a Christian will be as secure as among Christians. He works for others, consequently he is needed by them, and they will feed him. Even a dog that is needed is fed and taken care of; how, then, will they not feed and guard a man who is needed by all men?

But a sick man, a man with a family, with children, is not wanted, — he cannot work, — and they will stop feeding him, those will say who are bound to prove the justice of the beastly life. This they will say, this they say now, and they do not see that they themselves who say this would like to act thus, but are unable to do so, and act quite differently. These very people, who do not acknowledge the applicability of Christ's teaching, none the less fulfil it. They all the time feed a sheep, an ox, a dog, which gets sick. They even do not kill an old horse, but give it work to do according to its strength; they feed their family, the lambs, the young pigs, the puppies, in expectation of profit from them; how, then, will they refuse to feed a useful man, when he gets sick, and how will they fail to find appropriate work for the old and the young, and how will they refuse to support people who will be able later on to do some work for them?

Not only will they do so, but they are doing so even now. Nine-tenths of men, the masses, are fed by one-tenth, by the rich and the strong, as though the masses were beasts of burden. And, no matter how dark the delusion in which this one-tenth lives, no matter how much it despises the remaining nine-tenths of people, this one-tenth of the mighty never takes the necessary sustenance away from the nine-tenths, however much they may wish to do so. The rich leave to the poor as much as is necessary for them to multiply and work for the rich. Of late this one-tenth has been working consciously for the purpose of feeding regularly the nine-tenths, that is, in order to get as much work out of them as possible, and to have them multiply and rear new workmen. Even the ants attend to the increase and rearing of their milch-cows, so how can men help doing the same, — attend-ing to the increase of those who work for them? Workmen are needed, and those who make use of the work will always see to it that these workmen should not decrease in numbers.

The objection to the practicability of Christ's teaching, which is, that if I do not earn anything for myself and do not retain what I earn, no one will feed my family, is just, but only in respect to idle, useless, and, therefore, harmful people, such as are the majority of our rich classes. No one will bring up the idle, unless it be senseless parents, because idle people are of no use to any one, not even to themselves; but even the worst of people will feed and rear working people. Calves are brought up, but a man is a more useful working animal than an ox, and so he has always been valued in the slave market.

This is the reason why the children will never be left without any cares.

Man does not live to have others work for him, but himself to work for others. He who will work will be fed.

These are truths that are confirmed by the life of the whole world.

Wherever man has worked he has always and everywhere received his sustenance, just as a horse receives its feed. The worker has received such a sustenance unwillingly, against his will, for the worker has wished but for this, — to be freed from work, to earn as much as possible, and to sit down on the shoulders of him who is now sitting on his. Such an unwilling worker, an envious and poor labourer, was not left without his sustenance, and has been even happier than the one who has not worked and has lived on the labours of other men. How much more happy will the workman according to Christ's teaching be, if his aim shall consist in doing as much work as possible and in receiving as little as possible for it! And how much more happy still will his situation be, when around him there will be a few, and perhaps many, like him, who will serve him!

Christ's teaching about work and its fruits is expressed in the narrative of the feeding of five and seven thousand persons with two fishes and five loaves. · Humanity will have the highest accessible good on earth, when men will not try to swallow and use up everything for themselves, but will do as Christ taught them at the shore of the sea.

It was necessary to feed thousands of people. One of Christ's disciples told him that he had seen several fishes in the possession of one man; the disciples had also several loaves of bread. Jesus knew that not all the people, who had come from a distance, had brought food with them. (That many had provisions is proved by the fact that all four gospels say that at the end of the feast there were gathered twelve baskets. If none but the boy had had anything, there could not have been twelve baskets in the field.) If Christ had not done what he did, that is, the miracle of feeding thousands with five loaves, there would have happened what is now taking place in the world. Those who had provisions would have eaten up everything, even with an effort, that nothing might be left. The stingy might have carried home anything that was left. Those who had nothing would have remained hungry, and would have looked with malicious envy at those who were eating; some of them might, indeed, have taken away some food by force from those who were provident, and there would have ensued quarrels and fights, and some would have gone home satiated, while others would have been hungry and angry: there would have taken place what happens in our life.

But Christ knew what he wanted to do (as it says in the Gospel); he taught all to sit round about him, and taught his disciples to offer to others what they had, and to tell the others to do likewise. And then it happened that, when all those who had provisions did what Christ's disciples had done, that is, offered their own food to others, all ate with moderation, and when they went around in the circle, even those who had had nothing at first got something to eat. And all were fed, and much bread was left, so much of it that twelve baskets of it were collected.

Christ teaches men that they must consciously act in this manner in their lives, for such is the law of man and of all humanity. Work is a necessary condition of man's life, and work gives the good to man; consequently the detention from other men of the fruits of one's own or of another's labour interferes with the good of man. The giving up of one's labours to another contributes to the good of man.

"If men do not take away from one another, they will starve," we say. It seems that the very opposite ought to be said: if men take things from one another, there will be people who will starve, as is actually the case.

Every man, no matter how he may live, — whether in accordance with Christ's teaching or with that of the world, — lives only by the work of other men. Other men have guarded him and given him food and drink, and guard and feed him now; but, according to the world's teaching, a man compels others by force and threats to continue to feed him and his family. According to Christ's teaching, a man is just as much taken care of and given food and drink by others; but, in order that other people may continue to guard and feed him, he does not compel any one to do so; he tries himself to serve others and to be useful to all, and thus becomes necessary for all. The people of this world will always desire to stop feeding a useless man who compels them by force to feed him, and with the first opportunity not only stop feeding him, but also kill him as a useless man. But all men, no matter how mean they may be, will carefully feed and guard him who is working for them.

Which, then, is more correct, more sensible, and more joyful? To live according to the teaching of the world, or according to that of Christ?

XI.

Christ's teaching establishes God's kingdom upon earth. It is not true that the carrying out of this teaching is difficult: it is not only not difficult, but is even inevitable for a man who has become acquainted with it. This teaching gives the one possible salvation from the inevitably imminent danger of the perdition of the personal life. Finally, the fulfilment of this teaching not only does not invite to sufferings and deprivations in this life, but also frees us from nine-tenths of the sufferings which we endure in the name of the teaching of the world.

When I understood this, I asked myself: Why have I not fulfilled this teaching, which gives me what is good, salvation and joy, but have fulfilled something quite different, — that which has made me unhappy? There could be but one answer: I did not know the truth, — it was concealed from me.

When the meaning of Christ's teaching was for the first time revealed to me, I did not think that the elucidation of this meaning would ever bring me to the negation of the church teaching. It only seemed to me that the church had not yet reached those deductions which result from Christ's teaching, but I did not think in the least that the newly revealed meaning of Christ's teaching and its deductions would bring discord between me and the church teaching. I was afraid of it, and so, during my investigations, I not only avoided finding any fault with the church doctrine, but, on the contrary, intentionally shut my eyes to those propositions which seemed obscure and strange to me, but did not contradict that which I regarded as the essence of the Christian teaching.

But the farther I went in the study of the Gospel, the more clearly was there revealed to me the meaning of Christ's teaching and the more inevitable became for me the choice between Christ's teaching, which was rational, clear, and in harmony with my conscience, and which gave me salvation, and the diametrically opposite teaching, which was not in harmony with my reason and my conscience, and which gave me nothing but the consciousness of my perdition together with all the others. I could not help but reject one after another the tenets of the church. I did this unwillingly, with a struggle, with a desire to soften as much as possible my dissension with the church, to keep from separating from it, from being deprived of the most joyous support in faith, — of my communion with many. But when I finished my work, I saw that, no matter how much I tried to retain as much of the church doctrine as possible, nothing was left of it. Not only was there nothing left, but I convinced myself that nothing could be left.

Just as I was finishing my work the following incident occurred: my young son told me that between two of our servants, uneducated men who could scarcely read, there was going on a dispute in regard to an article in a religious book, in which it said that it was not sinful to kill criminals or to kill in a war. I did not believe it was possible for such a thing to be printed, and so asked for the book. The book under dispute is called "Expository Prayer-book, Third Edition, Eightieth Thousand. Moscow, 1879." On p. 163 of this book it says:

"What is the sixth commandment of God? — Thou shalt not kill. — What does God forbid by this commandment? — He forbids killing, that is, depriving a man of life. — Is it sinful legally to put to death a criminal and to kill an enemy in war? — It is not. A criminal is deprived of life in order to put a stop to the great evil which he is doing: the enemy is killed in war, because in a war we fight for our emperor and our country." To these words is limited the explanation of why the commandment of God is put aside. I did not believe my eyes.

The disputants asked for my opinion in the matter of their dispute. I told the one who acknowledged the justice of what was printed, that the explanation was not correct.

"But how do they print incorrectly against the law?" he asked me.

I could not answer him. I kept the book and glanced it through. The book contains: (1) thirty-one prayers with instructions as to genuflexions and the putting together of fingers; (2) an exposition of the Symbol of Faith; (3) unexplained extracts from the fifth chapter of Matthew, which for some reason are called commandments for the attainment of blessedness; (4) the ten commandments of Moses with explanations, which for the most part make them void, and (5) troparia for holidays.

As I have said, I tried not only to avoid judging the ecclesiastic faith, but also to see it from its best side, and so did not hunt for its weak sides; though I well knew its academic literature, I was absolutely unacquainted with its didactic literature. The prayer-book, which was disseminated in such an enormous number of copies as late as 1879, and which called forth the doubts of the simplest kind of men, startled me.

I could not believe that the purely pagan contents of the prayer-book, which had nothing Christian in it, could be a doctrine which the church consciously disseminated among the masses. In order to verify it, I bought all the books published by the Synod, or "under its auspices," which contained brief expositions of the church's faith for children and for the masses and read them all.

Their contents were almost new to me. When I had studied religion, these books had not yet existed. So far as I remember, there did not exist the commandments of the beatitudes, nor the doctrine that it was not sinful to kill. It does not exist in any of the old Russian Catechisms. It is not to be found in the Catechism of Peter Mogíla, nor in those of Platón, nor in that of Byelyakóv, nor in the short Catholic Catechisms. This innovation was made by Filarét, who also composed a Catechism for the military profession. The Expository Catechism is based on it. The basal book is the "Extensive Christian Catechism of the Orthodox Church for the Use of All Orthodox Christians," published by order of his Imperial Majesty.

The book is divided into three parts: on faith, on hope, and on charity. In the first there is an analysis of the Nicene Symbol of Faith. In the second there is an analysis of the Lord's Prayer and of the eight verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew, which form the introduction to the sermon on the mount and which for some reason are called the commandments for the attainment of blessedness. (These two parts treat of the dogmas of the church, of prayers and sacraments, but there is no teaching about life.) In the third part there is an exposition of the duties of a Christian. In this part, which is entitled "On Charity," there is an exposition of the ten commandments of Moses, and not of the commandments of Christ. The commandments of Moses seem to be expounded merely in order to teach people not to fulfil them and to act in a contrary manner. After each commandment there is a provisory clause which destroys the commandment.

In reference to the first commandment, which enjoins us to worship the one God, the Catechism teaches us to worship angels and saints, not to speak of the Mother of God and the three persons of God (Explan. Cat. pp. 107–108). In reference to the second commandment, — about making no idols, — the Catechism teaches us to worship the icons (p. 108). In reference to the third commandment, — about swearing in vain, — the Catechism teaches men to swear at every command of the *legal* power (p. iii). In reference to the fourth commandment, — about keeping the Sabbath, — the Catechism teaches us to celebrate the Sunday, and not the Sabbath, and thirteen great and a multitude of minor holidays, and to fast at all fasts, Wednesdays, and Fridays (pp. 112–115). In reference to the fifth commandment, — about honouring father and mother, — the Catechism teaches us "to honour the emperor, the country, the spiritual pastors, *who command in various relations*" (*sic*); and about the honouring of the commanders there are three pages with a list of all kinds of commanders: "commanders in schools, civil commanders, judges, military commanders, masters (*sic*) in relation to those who serve them and whom they own" (*sic*) (pp. 116–119) I am quoting from the Catechism of the year 1864. Twenty years have passed since the abolition of servitude, and no one has taken the trouble even of casting out this phrase which, on the occasion of God's commandment to honour our parents, was introduced into the Catechism for the purpose of supporting and justifying slavery.

In reference to the sixth commandment, thou shalt not kill, — men are taught from the very first lines to kill others.

"Q. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

"A. The killing of our neighbour in any manner whatsoever.

"Q. Is every killing a murder against the law?

"A. It is not illegal murder, when the killing is done *as a duty*, such as: (1) when a criminal is *put to death* according to legal process; (2) when an enemy is killed *in a war* waged for the emperor and the country." (The italics are in the original.) And further on:

"Q. What cases may be referred to illegal murder?

"A. . . . when one *conceals or frees* a murderer."

And this is printed and forcibly impressed in hundreds of thousands of copies and under the threat of punishment upon all Russians in the form of a Christian doctrine. The whole Russian nation is taught this. This is taught to all innocent angel-children, whom Christ asks not to have driven away from him, because theirs is the kingdom of God, — those children whom we must resemble in order that we may enter into the kingdom of God, whom we must resemble in order that we may not know it, — those children of whom Christ, defending them, said, Woe unto him that offendeth one of these little ones. And it is these children that are taught by force that this is the one sacred law of God.

These are not proclamations that are secretly distributed at the peril of hard labour, but such that a failure to agree with them is punished by hard labour. As I am writing these words I feel a creeping sensation, because I permit myself to say that it is impossible to change the chief commandment of God, which is written down in all laws and in all hearts, with meaningless words, such as *as a duty, for the emperor and the country,* and that people ought not to be taught this.

Yes, there has happened what Christ warned people against, when he said (Luke xi. 33–36 and Matt. vi. 23): If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

The light that is in us has become darkness, and the darkness in which we live has become terrible.

Woe unto you, said Christ, woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye are the more guilty. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him worse than he was. Woe unto you, ye blind guides!

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and assume that if ye had lived in the days when the prophets were killed, you would not have been partakers with them in their blood. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are like them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure which was begun by those that are like you. And I will send you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your assemblies and persecute from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from Abel.

All blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

This sounds as though it had been written but yesterday against those men who now no longer compass sea and land, blaspheming against the Holy Ghost and guiding people to a faith which makes them worse, but outright force them to receive this faith and persecute and ruin all those prophets and righteous men who try to destroy their deception.

I became convinced that the church doctrine, even though it has called itself Christian, is that same darkness against which Christ fought and commanded his disciples to fight.

Christ's teaching, like every religious teaching, contains two sides: (1) the teaching about the life of men, — how each individually and all together have to live, — the ethical teaching, and (2) an explanation why men must live in this and not that way, — the metaphysical teaching. One is the consequence and at the same time the cause of the other. A man must live thus because such is his destination, or, the destination of man is such, and so he must live accordingly. These two sides of every teaching are to be found in all the religions of the world. Such is the religion of the Brahmins, of Confucius, of Buddha, of Moses, and such also is Christ's religion. It teaches life, how to live, and explains why you must live in this manner and not otherwise.

But what has happened with all the teachings, with Brahmanism, Judaism, Buddhism, has also happened with Christ's teaching. Men depart from the teaching about life, and among the number of men there appear such as undertake to justify this departure. These men, who, according to Christ's expression, seat themselves in Moses' seat, explain the metaphysical side of the teaching in such a way that the ethical demands of the teaching become non-obligatory and give way to external worship, to rites. This phenomenon is common to all religions, but never, it seems to me, has this phenomenon been expressed with such lucidity as in Christianity. It found here such a lucid expression, because Christ's teaching is the most exalted teaching; and it is most exalted, because the metaphysics and the ethics of Christ's teaching are to such a degree inseparably connected and defined by one another that it is impossible to separate one from the other, without depriving the whole teaching of its meaning and also because Christ's teaching is in itself a protestantism, that is, a negation not only of the ritual precepts of Judaism, but also of every external worship; and so this rupture could not help but completely pervert the teaching and deprive it of every sense. And so it happened.

The rupture between the teaching about life and the explanation of life began with the preaching of Paul, who did not know the ethical teaching which is expressed in the Gospel of Matthew, and who preached a metaphysico-cabalistic theory, which was foreign to Christ; it was fully accomplished in the time of Constantine, when it was found possible to clothe the whole pagan structure of life, without changing it, in Christian garments and then pronounce it Christian.

From the time of Constantine, a pagan of the pagans, whom the church for all his crimes and vices counts among the number of the saints, there begin the councils, and the centre of gravity of Christianity is transferred entirely to the metaphysical side of the teaching. This metaphysical teaching, with its concomitant rites, departs more and more from its fundamental meaning and arrives at what it has arrived at now, at a teaching which explains the mysteries of the heavenly life, which are most inaccessible to the human understanding, and offers the most complicated divine rites, but gives no religious teaching whatever about the earthly life.

All religions, except the Christianity of the churches, demand of those who confess them not only certain rites, but also the execution of certain good acts and the refraining from evil acts. Judaism demands circumcision, the observance of the Saturday, of almsgiving, of the year of the jubilee, and many other things. Mohammedanism demands circumcision, daily fivefold prayers, a tithe for the poor, worshipping before the grave of the prophet, and many other things. The same is true of all other religions. Whether these demands be good or bad, they are demands for acts. Pseudo-Christianity is the only one which demands nothing. There is nothing which a Christian is obliged to do, and nothing from which he is obliged to abstain, unless we consider fasts and prayers, which the church itself regards as not of an obligatory nature. All a pseudo-Christian has to do is to attend to the sacraments; but the sacraments are not performed by the believer himself, but by some one else. A pseudo-Christian is not obliged to do anything, nor to abstain from anything, in order that he may be saved, for the church performs over him everything necessary: he will be baptized and anointed with chrism, and will receive his communion and extreme unction, and give his confession, even though it be a dumb confession, and will be prayed for, — and he is saved. Since the days of Constantine, the Christian church has demanded no acts from its members; it even never asserted any demands for abstaining from anything. The Christian church has recognized and sanctified everything there was in the pagan world. It has recognized and sanctified divorce, and slavery, and courts, and all those powers which existed before, and wars, and capital punishment, and at baptism has demanded only a verbal renunciation of evil, and that only in the beginning; later, when they began to baptize children, they stopped asking even for that.

The church, which in words recognized Christ's teaching, in life directly denied it.

Instead of guiding the world in its life, the church, to please the world, so interpreted Christ's metaphysical teaching that from it there resulted no demands for life, and thus it did not keep people from living as they had lived. The church made a concession to the world, and, having made this concession to the world, it followed it. The world did everything which it wished, leaving it to the church to keep up with it as best it could in its explanations of the meaning of life. The world arranged its life, which in everything ran counter to Christ's teaching, and the church invented allegories to prove that men, though living contrary to Christ's law, in reality were living in harmony with it; and thus it ended by this, that the world began to live a life which was worse than the pagan life, and the church began not only to justify this life, but also to assert that Christ's teaching consisted in nothing but this.

But there came a time when the light of Christ's true teaching, as it was in the gospels, despite the fact that the church, feeling its unrighteousness, tried to conceal it (by forbidding translations of the Bible), — there came a time when this light through the so-called sectarians, even through the free-thinkers of the world, penetrated among the people, and the incorrectness of the church doctrine became manifest to men, and they began to change their former life, which the church justified, on the basis of this teaching of Christ, which came down to us in spite of the church.

Thus men, in spite of the church, have abolished slavery, which the church had justified, and religious inquisitions, and the power of emperors and popes, which the church sanctifies, and have now begun the next abolition in order, that of property and of states. The church has never asserted itself, and even now cannot assert itself, because the abolition of these injustices of life has taken place on the basis of that very Christian teaching which the church has preached, though trying to pervert it.

The teaching about the life of men has been emancipated from the church, and has established itself independently of it.

The church still possesses the explanations, but the explanations of what? A metaphysical explanation of a teaching has a meaning only when that teaching of life exists which it explains; but the church no longer possesses any explanation of life. It has only an explanation of that life which it once established, and which no longer exists. If the church still has some explanations of that life which existed before, such as the explanations of the Catechism that it is permissible to kill in the exercise of a duty, no one now believes in it. All the church has left now is temples, icons, gold stuffs, and words.

The church has carried the light of the Christian teaching about life through eighteen centuries and, wishing to conceal it in its garments, has burned herself in its flame. The world with its structure, which was sanctified by the church, has rejected the church in the name of those foundations of Christianity which the church has brought through in spite of itself, and is getting along without it. The fact is accomplished, and it is impossible to conceal it. Everything which lives and does not flabbily rankle, not living, but being only in everybody's way, everything which lives in our European world has defected from the church and from all churches and lives its own life independently of the church. Let not people say that this is so in the rotten Western Europe; our Russia, with its millions of rationalistic Christians, both educated and uneducated, who have rejected the church doctrine, shows conclusively that, in the sense of the defection from the church, it is, thank God, more rotten than Europe.

Everything which is alive is independent of the church.

The power of the state is based on tradition, on science, on popular election, on rude force, on anything you please but the church.

Wars and the relations of states among themselves are established on the principle of nationality, equilibrium, on anything you please but the principles of the church.

The institutions of the state directly ignore the church; the idea that the church can be the foundation of the court, of property, is only ridiculous in our time.

Science not only does not coöperate with the church doctrine, but even involuntarily, without wishing it, is in its development always inimical to the church.

Art, which formerly served the church alone, has now departed from it.

Not only has all life been emancipating itself from the church, but this life has no other relation to the church than that of contempt, so long as the church does not meddle with the affairs of life, and nothing but hatred, the moment the church endeavours to remind it of its former rights. If the form which we call the church still exists, it is so because people are afraid of breaking the vessel which once held such precious contents; only in this way it is possible to explain the present existence of Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and various Protestant churches.

All the churches, the Catholic, the Orthodox, and the Protestant, resemble guards who carefully guard a prisoner who has long ago left the prison and is walking among the guards and even fighting with them. Everything the world now lives by, socialism, communism, politico-economic questions, utilitarianism, the freedom and equality of men and classes of women, all the moral concepts of men, the sanctity of labour, the sanctity of reason, the sciences, the arts, everything which moves the world and appears inimical to the church, — all those parts of the teaching which, without knowing it, the church has brought down together with Christ's teaching, which is concealed by it.

In our time the life of the world proceeds in its own way, quite independently of the teaching of the church. This teaching has remained so far behind that the men of the world no longer hear the voices of the teachers of the church. Indeed, there is nothing to hear, because the church gives explanations only of that structure of life which the world has outgrown, or which no longer exists at all, or which is irrevocably being destroyed.

People were out in a boat and rowing it, while the steersman was at the helm. The people entrusted themselves to the steersman, and he guided them well; but there came a time when another steersman took his place, and he did not steer the boat. The boat moved fast and with ease. At first they did not notice that the new steersman did not steer, and they were glad that the boat moved so easily. But later, when they convinced themselves that the new steersman was not needed they began to laugh at him, and drove him away.

All this would be nothing, but the trouble is that, under the influence of their annoyance with the useless steersman, people have forgotten that it is impossible to know whither one is sailing, if there is no steersman. The same thing has happened with Christian society. The church does not steer, and it is easy to sail, and we have sailed a distance away, and all the successes of science, of which our nineteenth century is so proud, are simply this, that we are sailing without a helm. We are sailing, without knowing whither. We are living, and forming this our life, and absolutely fail to know for what purpose. But it is impossible to sail and row, without knowing whither, and it is impossible to live and form our life, without knowing for what purpose.

If people did nothing themselves, but were by an external force placed in that position in which they are, they would be able to answer the question as to why we are in this position in a very rational manner, by saying: We do not know, but we got into this position, and we are in it. But men create their own position for themselves, for others, and especially for their children, and so you cannot help but answer such questions as: why you collect millions of soldiers and join them yourselves, in order to kill and mutilate one another; why you have wasted enormous human forces, which are expressed in billions, in building up useless and harmful cities; why you establish your toy courts and send men whom you consider criminal from France to Cayenne, from Russia to Siberia, from England to Australia, when you yourselves know that this is senseless; why you abandon your favourite farming occupation, and labour in factories and plants which you dislike; why you educate your children that they may continue this life of which you do not approve; why you do all this. If all these were pleasant occupations, of which you were fond, you would still have to say why you were doing this or that; but when these are terribly difficult occupations, and you do them with an effort and with murmuring, you cannot help wondering why you are doing it all. We either must stop doing all this, or we must answer why we are doing it. Men have never lived without an answer to this question, and they cannot live without it. And men have always had an answer for it.

A Jew lived as he did, that is, he waged war, put people to death, built a temple, arranged all his life this way or that, because all this was prescribed in the law, which, in his conviction, came down from God himself. The same is true of a Hindoo, a Chinaman; the same was the case with a Roman, and is now the case with a Mohammedan; the same was true of a Christian a hundred years ago; the same is true now of the ignorant mass of Christians. To these questions an ignorant Christian now answers as follows: The military, the wars, the courts, the executions, all that exists according to God's law as transmitted to us by the church. The present world is a fallen world. All the evil that exists exists by the will of God, as a punishment for the sins of the world, and so we cannot mend this evil. All we can do is to save our souls by faith, sacraments, prayers, and submission to the will of God as transmitted to us through the church. But the church teaches us that every Christian must without opposition obey the kings, the anointed of the Lord, and the chiefs appointed by them, forcibly defend his own property and that of others, wage war, put to death, and suffer punishments by the will of the powers which are appointed by God.

No matter whether these explanations are good or bad, — to a believing Christian, as to a Jew, a Buddhist, a Mohammedan, they explained all the peculiarities of life, and a man did not renounce reason when he lived according to the law which he took to be divine. But now the time has come when only the most ignorant believe in these things, and the number of such men is diminishing with every day and hour. There is no possibility of arresting this motion. All men irrepressibly follow those who are walking in front, and all will arrive where the men of the front are standing. Now the men of the front are standing over an abyss: they are in a terrible condition, — they create their own lives and prepare life for all those who follow them, and find themselves in complete ignorance of why they are doing that which they are doing. Not one cultured leader is now able to give an answer to the direct question: "Why do you live the life you live? Why are you doing all you do?" I have tried to ask hundreds of people, and never have received any direct answer. Instead of a direct answer to a personal question as to why one lives and does so and so, I have always received an answer, not to my question, but to one which I had not put.

A believing Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, when asked why he lives as he does, that is, contrary to that teaching of Christ which he professes, will always avoid a direct answer and will begin to talk of the lamentable condition of unbelief of our present generation, of bad men who cause this unbelief, and of the significance and the future of the true church. But he does not answer why he himself does not do what his faith commands him to do. Instead of an answer about himself he talks of the general condition of humanity and of the church, as though his own life had no meaning for him and he were occupied only with the salvation of the whole of humanity and with what he calls the church.

A philosopher, no matter to what school he may belong, — whether he be an idealist, spiritualist, pessimist, positivist, — when asked why he lives as he does, that is, out of harmony with his philosophical teaching, will, instead of answering this question, talk of the progress of humanity, of that historic law of this progress which he has found and by which humanity strives after the good. But he will never give a direct answer to the question why he himself does not do in his life what he considers rational. A philosopher, like a believer, does not seem to be occupied with his own personal life, but only with the observation of the universal laws of humanity.

The average man, the vast majority of half-believing, half-unbelieving cultured men, of those who always, without exception, complain of their life and of the whole structure of our life, and foresee the ruin of everything, when asked why he lives this life which he condemns, and does nothing to improve it, will, instead of giving a direct answer, always begin to talk, not of himself, but of some general topic, — of justice, of commerce, of the state, of civilization. If he is a policeman or a prosecuting attorney, he will say, "How will the affairs of the government proceed, if, to improve my life, I shall stop taking part in it?" "And how about commerce?" he will say if he is a business man. "How about civilization, if I shall not take part in it, in order to improve my life?" He will always say so, as though the problem of his life did not consist in doing that good toward which he always strives, but in serving his country, or commerce, or civilization. The average man answers precisely like the believer or philosopher. In place of a personal question he puts a general one, and all three put it because they have no answer whatever to the personal question of life, because they have absolutely no real teaching about life, and they feel ashamed.

He feels ashamed, because he feels himself in the humiliating position of a man who has no teaching about life, whereas no man has ever lived, or ever can live, without it. Only in our Christian world the teaching about life and the explanations why life should be such and no other, that is, religion, have given place to the mere explanation as to why life ought to be such as it has been before, and religion has come to mean something which no one wants; but life itself has become independent of every teaching, that is, without any definition.

More than this: as is always the case, science has acknowledged precisely this accidental, monstrous condition of our society to be the law of all humanity. Savants, Tiele, Spencer, and others, most seriously treat of religion, understanding by it the metaphysical doctrines of the beginning of everything, without suspecting that they are not speaking of religion as a whole, but only of parts of it.

This has led to the remarkable phenomenon that in our day we see clever and learned men who are most naïvely convinced that they are free from all religion, merely because they do not acknowledge the metaphysical explanations of the beginning of everything, which at one time served somebody as an explanation of life. It does not occur to them that they must live somehow and that they do live somehow, and that that, on the basis of which they live one way, and not another, is religion. These people are convinced that they have very exalted convictions and no religion. But, no matter what their conversations may be, they have faith, so long as they do some rational acts, because all rational acts are determined by faith. Now the acts of these men are determined by the faith that they must always do only what they are commanded to do. The religion of men who do not acknowledge religion is a religion of submission to everything which the vast majority does, that is, more briefly, the religion of obedience to the existing power.

It is possible to live according to the teaching of the world, that is, an animal life, without acknowledging anything higher and more obligatory than the prescriptions of the existing power. But he who lives in this manner cannot affirm that he lives rationally. Before affirming that we live rationally we must answer the question as to what teaching about life we consider rational. We unfortunate people not only have no such teaching, but we have even lost the consciousness of the necessity of any rational teaching of life.

Ask the people of our time, both believers and unbelievers, what teaching they follow in life. They will have to confess that they follow the one teaching, the laws which are written by the officials of the Second Division or the legislative assemblies, and which are put in execution by the police. This is the only teaching which our European people acknowledge. They know that this teaching is not from heaven, not from the prophets, and not from wise men; they constantly condemn the decrees of these officials or legislative assemblies, but none the less acknowledge this teaching and obey its executors, the police, and obey them without opposition in its most terrible demands. The officials or assemblies write a law that every young man must be prepared to insult, suffer death, and kill others, and all fathers and mothers who have reared sons hasten to obey such a law, which was written but yesterday by a venal official and which to-morrow may be abolished.

The conception of a law as unquestionably rational and from the inner consciousness obligatory for all is to such a degree lost in our society, that the existence of a law, as held by the Jewish nation, which determines all their life, of a law which is obligatory, not from compulsion, but from the inner consciousness of each, is considered an exclusive property of the Jewish nation alone. The fact that the Jews obeyed only what in the depth of their souls they regarded as an indisputable truth which was received directly from God, that is, what was in conformity with their conscience, is considered a peculiarity of the Jews. But they consider that condition normal and proper for an educated man, which demands his obedience to what is admittedly written by despised men and is carried into execution by a policeman with a pistol, although each of them, or at least the majority of these men, considers it irregular, that is, contrary to his conscience.

I have looked in vain in our civilized world for some clearly expressed bases of life. There are none. There does not even exist the consciousness of their being necessary. There exists, on the contrary, a strange conviction that they are useless; that religion is nothing but a series of words about the future life, about God, and a series of rites, which, in the opinion of some, are very useful for the salvation of the soul and, in the opinion of others, quite useless; that life goes on of itself, and that no bases and no rules are wanted for it: all that is necessary is to do what one is commanded to do. Of that which forms the essence of faith, that is, the teaching of life and the explanation of its meaning, — the first is considered of no importance and not belonging to faith, and the second, that is, the explanation of a former life, or the discussions and divinations about the historical progress of life, is considered most important and serious. In everything which forms man's life, — how to live, whether one should go out to kill people, or not, whether to go and judge people, or not, whether to educate children in one way rather than in another, — men of our world unflinchingly entrust themselves to other men, who, like themselves, do not know why they live or why they cause others to live thus and not thus.

And such a life men regard as rational, and they are not ashamed of it!

The discord between the explanation of faith, which is called religion, and faith itself, which is called the social, political life, has now reached its highest degree, and the whole civilized majority of men are left for life with nothing but the faith in the policeman and the gendarme.

This state would be terrible, if it were absolutely such. But, fortunately, there are men in our day, the best men of our day, who are not satisfied with such a faith, and who have their own faith as to how men ought to live.

These people are considered very harmful, dangerous, and, above all, unbelieving, and yet these are the only believers of our time, not merely believers in general, but more particularly believers in Christ's teaching, if not in the whole teaching, at least in a small part of it.

These men frequently do not know Christ's teaching at all and do not understand it, and frequently, like their enemies, do not accept the chief basis of Christ's faith, the non-resistance to evil, and often even hate Christ; but their whole faith as to what life ought to be is based on Christ's teaching. No matter how these men may be persecuted, no matter how much they may be maligned, they are the only men who do not submit without a murmur to everything that is demanded of them, and so they are the only men of our time who do not live an animal, but a rational life, — the only true believers.

The thread which unites the world with the church that gave a meaning to the world became weaker and weaker in proportion as the contents, the sap of life, infiltrated more and more into the world. Now that the sap is all infiltrated, the connecting thread has become a mere impediment.

It is the mysterious process of birth, and it takes place in our full sight. At one and the same time the last tie with the church is broken, and the independent process of life is established.

The teaching of the church, with its dogmas, its councils, its hierarchy, is indisputably connected with Christ's teaching. This connection is as manifest as the connection of the new-born fœtus with the mother's womb. But, as the umbilical cord and the placenta after birth become useless pieces of flesh, which, out of respect for what was contained in them, must carefully be buried in the ground, so the church has become a useless, obsolete organ, which, out of respect for what it once was, ought to be put out of sight. The moment respiration and the circulation of the blood are established, the connection, which before was a source of nutrition, has become an impediment, and senseless are the efforts to retain this connection and to compel the child that has come out into the world to receive its nutriment through the umbilical cord, and not through the mouth and lungs.

But the liberation of the babe from the mother's womb is not yet life. The babe's life depends on the establishment of a new connection of nutrition with the mother. The same thing must happen with our Christian world. Christ's teaching has carried our world and has given it birth. The church — one of the organs of Christ's teaching — has done its work, and is now useless, and an impediment. The world cannot be guided by the church, but the liberation of the world from the church is not yet life. Its life will ensue when it shall recognize its impotence and shall feel the necessity for a new way of nutrition. It is this that must take place in our Christian world; it has to start crying from the consciousness of its helplessness, and only the consciousness of its helplessness, the consciousness of the impossibility of the former nutrition and of the impossibility of any other nutrition than the mother's milk, will bring it to the mother's breast, which is swollen with milk.

With our externally so self-confident, bold, determined, and in the depth of its consciousness so frightened and confused, European world there is taking place the same that happens with a new-born babe: it tosses about, stretches, cries, pushes, as though it were angry, and cannot understand what it should do. It feels that the source of its former nutrition has gone dry, but does not yet know where to look for a new one.

A newly born lamb rolls its eyes and turns its ears, and shakes its tail, and jumps about, and kicks. From its determined movements we judge that it knows everything, but the poor little animal knows nothing. All this determination and energy is the fruit of the mother's fluids, the transmission of which has just come to an end and can no longer be renewed. It is in a blessed and at the same time desperate state. It is full of freshness and vigour; but it will perish if it does not take hold of its mother's teats.

The same thing is happening in our European world. See what complicated, what apparently rational, what energetic life is boiling in the European world. It is as though all men knew everything they do and why they do it all. See with what determination, with what youthful strength, the men of our world do all which they do. The arts, the sciences, the industry, the social and the political activities, — everything is full of life. But all this is alive only because but lately it fed on the mother's fluids through the umbilical cord. There was the church which transmitted the rational teaching of Christ to the life of the world. Every phenomenon of the world was fed and strengthened by it. But the church has done its work, and has dried up. All the organs of the world are alive; the source of its former nutrition is stopped, and they have not yet found a new one; they are looking for it everywhere except with the mother, from whom they have just been liberated. Like a lamb, they are still making use of their former nutriment, but they have not yet reached a point where they can understand that this food is in the mother alone, but that it can be transmitted to them only in a different way from what it was before.

The work which the world has now to do is to understand that the process of the former unconscious nutrition has been outlived and that a new, conscious process of nutrition is wanted.

This new process consists in consciously accepting those truths of the Christian teaching which formerly were infiltrated in humanity through the organ of the church and by which even now humanity lives. Men must again raise up the light by which they lived, but which has been concealed from them, and place it high before themselves and before others, and consciously live by this light.

Christ's teaching, as a religion which defines life and gives an explanation of the life of men, stands now as it stood before men eighteen hundred years ago. But formerly the world possessed the explanations of the church, which, while shielding the teaching from it, none the less seemed sufficient for its old life, whereas now the time has come when the church has revived, and the world has no explanations for its new life and cannot help but feel its helplessness, and so cannot help but receive Christ's teaching.

Christ teaches above everything else that men must believe in the light, while the light is in them. Christ teaches men to place this light of reason higher than anything else and to live in accordance with it, without doing what they themselves regard as senseless. If you consider it irrational to go out to kill the Turks or the Germans, — do not go; if you consider it irrational forcibly to deprive poor people of the result of their labour, in order to don a silk hat, or lace yourself in a corset, or fix up a drawing-room, which only embarrasses you, — do not do it; if you consider it irrational to imprison those who are corrupted by idleness and harmful company, that is, to put them where the company is most harmful and the idleness most complete, — do not do it; if you consider it irrational to live in the infected air of the cities, when it is possible for you to live in the open, do not do it; if you consider it irrational to teach the children first of all and more than anything else the grammars of the dead languages, do not do it. Do not do what our European world is doing now: living and not considering life rational, working and not considering the works rational, not believing in one's own reason, not living in accordance with it.

Christ's teaching is the light. The light shineth, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. It is impossible not to receive the light when it shines. It is impossible to dispute with it, impossible not to agree with it. It is impossible not to agree with Christ's teaching, because it comprehends all errors, in which men live, and does not come in contact with them, but penetrates them all like the ether, of which the physicists speak. Christ's teaching is equally inevitable for every man of our world, no matter what his position may be. Christ's teaching cannot fail to be accepted by men, not because it is impossible to deny that metaphysical explanation which it gives (everything can be denied), but because it alone gives those rules of life without which humanity has not lived and cannot live, and not one man has lived or can live, if he wants to live like a man, that is, a rational life.

The force of Christ's teaching is not in its explanation of the meaning of life, but in what results from it, — in the teaching about life. Christ's metaphysical teaching is not new. It is still the same teaching of humanity which is written in the hearts of men, and which all the true sages of the world have professed. But the force of Christ's teaching is in the application of this metaphysical teaching to life.

The metaphysical foundation of the ancient teaching of the Jews and of Christ is one and the same, — the love of God and of our neighbour. But, for the application of this teaching to life according to Moses, as the Jews understood it, there was demanded the fulfilment of 613 commandments, which often are senseless and cruel, and all of which are based on the authority of the Scripture.

Christ's teaching about life, which results from the same metaphysical basis, is expressed in five commandments, which are rational and good, and bear in themselves their meaning and their justification, and comprehend the whole life of men.

Christ's teaching cannot help but be accepted by all believing Jews, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and others, who may have any doubts as to the truth of their own law; still less can it be rejected by those people of our Christian world who now have no moral law whatever.

Christ's teaching has no quarrel with the men of our world about their conception of the world; it agrees with them in advance and, including their conception in itself, gives them what they lack, what they need, and what they are looking for: it gives them the path of life, and at that not a new one, but one they have long known and which is familiar to them.

You are a believing Christian of some sect or creed. You believe in the creation of the world, in the Trinity, in the fall and redemption of man, in the sacraments, in prayers, and in the church. Christ's teaching not only does not quarrel with you, but even fully agrees with your world conception; it only gives you what you lack. While preserving your present faith, you feel that the life of the world and your own life are full of evil, and you do not know how to avoid it. Christ's teaching (which is obligatory for you, because it is the teaching of your God) gives you simple, practicable rules of life, which will free you and other people from the evil which torments you. Believe in the resurrection, in Paradise, in hell, in the Pope, in the church, in the sacraments, in redemption; pray, as your faith demands of you, go to communion, sing psalms, — all that does not hinder you from fulfilling what was revealed by Christ for your good: be not angry, commit no debauch, do not swear, do not defend yourself by force, wage no war.

It may be that you will not fulfil some one of these rules, and will be carried away, and you will break one of these, even as you now, in moments of infatuation, break the rules of your faith, the rules of civil law, or the laws of decency. Even so you will, perhaps, in moments of infatuation depart from Christ's rules; but in calm minutes you must not do what you are doing now, — do not arrange life in such a way that it is hard not to be angry, not to commit debauch, not to swear, not to defend yourself, not to wage war, but in such a way that it will be hard to do this. You cannot help but acknowledge this, because God has ordered you to do so.

You are an unbelieving philosopher of some school or other. You say that everything in the world takes place according to a law which you have discovered. Christ's teaching does not quarrel with you and recognizes in full the law which you have discovered. But despite this law of yours, according to which the good which you wish and have prepared for humanity will come to pass in a thousand years, there is also your personal life, which you can live either in conformity with reason, or contrary to it; but for your personal life you now have no rules but those which are written by men you do not respect and which are executed by policemen. Christ's teaching gives you rules which certainly agree with your law, because your law of altruism or of the one will is nothing but another paraphrase of the same teaching of Christ.

You are an average man, half believing, half not believing, who have no time to reflect on the meaning of human life, and you have no definite world conception: you do everything which everybody else does, Christ's teaching does not quarrel with you. It says: very well, you are not able to reflect, or to believe in the truth of the teaching which is imparted to you: it is easier for you to do precisely as everybody else does; but, no matter how modest you may be, you none the less feel in yourself that inward judge who at times approves of your deeds, which are in harmony with everybody, and at times does not approve of them. No matter how modest your lot may be, you have to reflect, and to ask yourself whether you should act like everybody else, or in your own way. Precisely in such cases, that is, when the necessity arises for you to solve such a question, Christ's rules will stand out before you in all their force. These rules will certainly give you an answer to your question, because they comprehend your whole life, and they will answer you in conformity with your reason and your conscience. If you are nearer to faith than to unbelief, you, by acting in this manner, will act according to God's will; if you are nearer to free thought, you, by acting in this manner, act according to the most sensible rules that exist in the world, of which you will convince yourself, because Christ's rules bear in themselves their meaning and their justification.

Christ said (John xii. 31), Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Again he said (John xvi. 33), These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Indeed, the world, that is, the evil of the world, is vanquished.

If there still exists a world of evil, it exists only as something dead, it lives only by inertia: it no longer has the foundations of life. It does not exist for him who believes in Christ's commandments. It is vanquished in the rational consciousness of the son of man. A train at full speed, though with steam shut off, will continue running forward in a straight direction, but all the rational work has for some time been going on for the opposite direction.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:

and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John v. 4).

The faith which is overcoming the world is the faith in Christ's teaching.

XII.

I BELIEVE in Christ's teaching, and my faith consists in the following:

I believe that my good is possible on earth only when all people will fulfil Christ's teaching.

I believe that the fulfilment of this teaching is possible, easy, and joyful.

I believe that even so long as the teaching is not being fulfilled, and I am one among all the unbelievers, I still can do nothing for the salvation of my life from inevitable perdition but fulfil this teaching, even as he can do nothing else who in a burning house has found a door of salvation.

I believe that my life according to the teaching of the world has been agonizing, and that only the life according to Christ's teaching gives me the good which the Father of life has intended for me.

I believe that this teaching gives the good to the whole of humanity, saves me from inevitable perdition, and gives me here the greatest good, and so I cannot help but fulfil it.

The law was given by Moses, but the good and truth through Jesus Christ (John i. 17). Christ's teaching is the good and truth. Formerly, when I did not know the truth, I did not know even the good. Taking the evil to be the good, I fell into this evil and doubted the legality of my striving after the good; but now I understand and believe that the good after which I strive is the will of the Father and the most legitimate essence of my life.

Christ told me, Live for the good, but do not believe those traps, those temptations (*σκάνδαλον*), which, enticing you by the semblance of the good, deprive you of the good and inveigle you into evil. Your good is your union with all men, the evil is a violation of the union with the son of man. Do not deprive yourself of the good which is given you.

Christ has shown me that the union with the son of man, the love of men among themselves, is not, as I used to think, an aim toward which men must strive, but that this union, this love of men among themselves, is their natural condition, the one in which, according to his words, children are born, and the one in which all men live until this condition is impaired by deceit, error, and offences.

But Christ has not only shown me this: he has clearly, without the possibility of an error, counted out to me in his commandments all the offences, without an exception, which have deprived me of this natural condition of unity, love, and the good, and which have inveigled me into evil. Christ's commandments give me a means for saving myself from the temptations which have deprived me of my good, and so I cannot help but believe in these commandments.

The good of life was given to me, and I myself ruined it. Christ by his commandments has shown me those temptations by which I am ruining my good, and so I cannot do that which ruins my good. In this, and in this alone, does my faith consist.

Christ has shown me that the first offence which ruins my good is my enmity with men, my anger at them. I cannot help believing it, and so can no longer consciously be inimical toward other people; I can no longer, as I used to do, be glad of my anger, pride myself on it, fan and justify it by acknowledging myself to be important and clever, and other people insignificant, lost, and senseless; I can no longer, at the first suggestion of my submitting to anger, fail to acknowledge myself guilty and try to make peace with those who are inimical toward me.

But this is not enough. If now I know that my anger is an unnatural, harmful, morbid condition for me, I also know what offence has brought me to it. This offence consisted in this, that I separated myself from other people, recognizing but a few of them as my equals, and all others as insignificant, not men (*ρακά*), or stupid and uneducated (senseless). Now I see that this separating myself from other men and recognizing others as "raca" and senseless has been the chief cause of my enmity with men. As I recall my former life, I now see that I never permitted my hostile feeling to be fanned against those men whom I considered above myself, and that I never offended them; but, on the other hand, the slightest disagreeable action of a man whom I considered below me provoked my anger at him and my indignation, and the higher I considered myself above such a man, the more easily did I offend him; at times a mere imagined baseness of a man's position provoked my desire to offend him. Now I understand that only he will stand higher than other men who will humble himself before others, who will be a servant of all men. Now I understand why that which is high before men is an abomination before God, and why it is woe to the rich and the glorified, and why the poor and the humble are blessed.

Only now do I understand it and believe in it, and my faith has changed my whole valuation of what is good and high, bad and low in life. Everything which heretofore had appeared good and high to me, — honours, glory, culture, riches, the complexity and refinement of life, of the appointments, the food, the apparel, the external ways, — all this became low and bad for me, and the peasant existence, the ingloriousness, poverty, coarseness, simplicity of the surroundings, of the food, the apparel, and ways, — all this became good and high for me. And so, although even now, when I know this, I may in moments of forgetfulness abandon myself to anger and offend my brother, I can no longer in my calm mood serve this offence, which, raising me above other men, deprived me of my true good, — of union and love, — even as a man cannot lay a trap for himself, if he fell into it before and came very near perishing through it. Now I can no longer coöperate with what externally raises me above other men, and separates me from them; I cannot, as I used to do before, in my own case, nor in that of any other person, acknowledge any distinctions, ranks, and honours, except the name and dignity of man; I cannot seek glory and praise; I cannot seek any knowledge which would separate me from the rest; I cannot help but try to free myself from my wealth, which separates me from men; I cannot help but in my life, in its circumstance, in food, in apparel, in external ways, look for everything which unites me with the majority of men, and does not separate me from them.

Christ has shown me that another offence which ruins my good is the lust of fornication, that is the lust for another woman than the one with whom I came together. I cannot help but believe this, and so I cannot, as I used to do before, acknowledge the lust of fornication as a natural and exalted quality of man; I cannot justify it to myself by my love of beauty, by infatuation, or by defects in my wife; even at the first suggestion of submitting to the lust of fornication I cannot help but acknowledge myself in a morbid and unnatural condition, and search for every means which could liberate me from this evil.

Now that I know that the lust of fornication is an evil for me, I know also the offence which formerly used to lead me into it, and so I can no longer serve it. I know now that the chief cause of the offence does not lie in the fact that men cannot abstain from fornication, but in the fact that the majority of men and of women have been abandoned by those with whom they have come together at first. Now I know that every abandonment of a man or a woman after they have come together for the first time is that very divorce which is forbidden by Christ, because husbands and wives who are abandoned by their mates bring all debauch into the world.

Recalling what it was that led me to commit fornication, I now see that, besides that savage education, which caused the lust of fornication to be fanned in me physically and mentally, and caused me to justify it with all the cunning of reason, the chief offence which caught me consisted in my abandoning the woman with whom I had come together for the first time, and in the condition of the abandoned women, who surrounded me on all sides. Now I see that the chief force of the offence was not in my lust, but in the ungratified state of my lust and of the lust of those abandoned women who surrounded me on all sides. Now I understand Christ's words. In the beginning God created woman and man so that the two should be one, and therefore man cannot and must not sever what God has united. Now I understand that monogamy is a natural law of humanity, which cannot be violated. Now I fully appreciate the words about this, that he who is divorced from his wife, that is, from the woman with whom he came together for the first time, in order to take up another, causes her to commit debauch, and introduces against himself a new evil into the world.

I believe in this, and this faith changes all my former valuation of what is good and high, bad and low in life. What formerly used to appear to me as very good, — the refined and elegant life, the passionate and poetic love, which is extolled by all poets and artists, — all this appeared bad and disgusting to me. On the contrary, what appeared to me as good was this, — a coarse, scant life of labour, which moderates lust; what appeared to me exalted and important was not so much the human institution of marriage, which imposed the external stamp of legality on a certain union of a man and a woman, as the union of any man with any woman, which, having once been accomplished, can no longer be violated without violating the will of God. If I even now, in a minute of forgetfulness, can fall a prey to the lust of fornication, I, knowing the offence which has led me into this evil, can no longer serve it, as I did before.

I cannot wish and seek that physical idleness and fat living which fanned in me inordinate lust; I cannot seek those amusements which fanned the amatory lust in me, such as novels, verses, music, theatres, balls, which formerly appeared to me not only harmless, but even as amusements of a very high order; I cannot abandon my wife, knowing that the abandonment of her is the first trap for me, for her, and for others; I cannot contribute to the idle and fat living of other men, and cannot take part in and arrange those lustful amusements — novels, theatres, operas, balls, and so forth — which serve as a trap for me and for other people; I cannot encourage the celibate life of those who are ripe for marriage; I cannot take part in the separation of husband and wife; I cannot make any distinctions between cohabitations which are called marriages and those which are not called so; I cannot help but regard as holy and obligatory that marital union in which a man happens to be.

Christ has revealed to me that a third offence which is ruining my good is the offence of swearing. I cannot help but believe this, and so I can no longer, as I used to do, promise a person anything under oath, and I can no longer, as I used to do, justify myself in my oath by saying that there is nothing bad in it for people; that all men do so; that it is necessary for the state; that I or others will fare worse if we decline to comply with this demand.

Now I know that this is an evil for me and for men, and I cannot do it.

This is not all; now I know also the offence which inveigled me into this evil, and I can no longer serve it. I know that the offence consists in this, that the deception is sanctified in the name of God. Now the deception consists in this, that men promise in advance that they will obey the command of a man or of a set of men, though a man can never obey any one but God. Now I know that the most terrible evil of the world, so far as its consequences are concerned, — murder in wars, incarcerations, capital punishments, tortures of men, — is committed only thanks to this offence in the name of which the responsibility is taken away from the people who commit the wrong. As I now recall many an evil which used to cause my condemnation and dislike of people, I now see that it was all called forth by an oath, by the recognition of the necessity of submitting oneself to the will of other people. Now I understand the meaning of the words, Everything which is above the simple affirmation or denial, above "yes" and "no," every promise given in advance, is an evil.

Understanding this, I believe that the oath ruins my good and the good of other men; and my faith changes the valuation of what is good and bad, high and low. Everything which heretofore has seemed good and high, — the obligation of loyalty to a government, which is confirmed by an oath, the extortion of this oath from men, and all acts which are contrary to conscience and are performed in the name of this oath, — all this now appears bad and low to me. And so I can no longer recede from Christ's commandment, which forbids swearing; I can no longer swear to another, nor cause others to swear, nor in any way be instrumental in this, that men should swear or cause others to swear, and should consider the oath important and necessary, or even not harmful, as many think.

Christ has revealed to me that a fourth offence which deprives me of my good is the resistance to evil by offering violence to other people. I cannot help but believe that this is an evil for me and for other people, and so I cannot consciously do it, and I cannot, as I used to do before, justify this evil by saying that it is necessary for my defence and for the defence of other people, for the defence of my property and for that of other people; at the first suggestion that I am offering violence I can no longer help renouncing and stopping it.

But I not only know this, I now know also the offence which has brought me to this evil. Now I know that this offence consists in the delusion that my life can be made secure by defending myself and my property against other people. Now I know that a great part of mens' evil is due to this, that, instead of giving their labour to others, they not only do not give it, but even deprive themselves of all labour and forcibly take away the labour of others. As I now recall all the evil which I did to myself and to others, and all the evil which others did, I see that a great part of the evil is due to this, that we considered it possible by means of defence to secure and improve our life. Now I understand also these words, Man is not born to be worked for, but to work for others, and the meaning of the words, The workman is worthy of his meat. Now I believe that my good and the good of others is possible only when each will work, not for himself, but for another, and not only will not keep his labour from another, but will give it to every one who needs it.

This faith changed my valuation of what is good and high, bad and low. Everything which heretofore had seemed to me good and high, — wealth, property of every kind, honour, the consciousness of one's own dignity, rights, — everything now became bad and low; and everything which had seemed to me to be bad and low, —

working for others, poverty, humiliation, renunciation of all property and of all rights, — became good and high in my eyes. If in a moment of forgetfulness I can still be carried away to exercise force in order to defend myself and others, or my property and that of others, I can no longer calmly and conscientiously serve that offence which ruins me and others, —I cannot acquire possessions; I cannot exercise any violence against any man whatsoever, unless it be a child, and in his case only in order to save him from an imminent evil; I cannot take part in any activity of power, which has for its aim the protection of men and of their property by the exercise of violence; I cannot be a judge, or a participant in any court, or a chief, or a participant in any official capacity; nor can I contribute to this, that others should take part in courts and offices.

Christ has revealed to me that a fifth offence which deprives me of my good is the division which we make between our own nation and another. I cannot help but believe in this, and so, if in a minute of forgetfulness there may arise in me a hostile feeling toward a man of another nation, I cannot help, in a calm moment, but recognize this sentiment as false; I cannot justify myself, as I used to do before, by recognizing the superiority of my nation over another, and by the delusions, cruelty, or barbarism of another nation; at the first reminder of it I cannot help but try to be more friendly to a man of another nation than to a countryman of mine.

But I not only know now that my separation from other nations is an evil which ruins my good, I know also the offence which has led me into this evil, and I can no longer, as I used to before, serve it calmly and consciously. I know that this offence consists in the delusion that my good is connected only with the good of my nation and not with the good of the whole world. Now I know that my union with other men cannot be impaired by a border line and by governmental decisions as to my belonging to this nation or to that. Now I know that all men are everywhere equal and brothers.

As I now recall the evil which I did, experienced, and saw in consequence of the enmity of nations, it is clear to me that the cause of everything was the gross deception called patriotism and love of country. As I recall my education, I now see that the feeling of enmity with other nations, the feeling of separation from them, never existed in me, and that all these evil sentiments were artificially inoculated in me by a senseless education. I now understand the meaning of the words, Do good to your enemies; do to them what you would do to your own people. You are all the children of one Father, and be like your Father, that is, make no division between your nation and another, — be alike to all. Now I understand that the good is possible for me only when I recognize the union with all men of the world without any exception.

I believe in this, and this faith has changed my whole valuation of what is good and bad, high and low. What before presented itself to me as good and high, — the love of country, of my nation, of my government, the serving of them to the disadvantage of the good of other people, the military exploits of men, — all this appeared disgusting and miserable to me. Everything which had seemed bad and disgraceful, — renunciation of one's own country, cosmopolitanism, — now, on the contrary, seemed good and high to me. If now, in a minute of forgetfulness, I may coöperate more with a Russian than with a foreigner, and wish success to the Russian empire or nation, I can no longer, in a calm minute, serve the offence which ruins me and other people. I cannot acknowledge any countries or nations, I cannot participate in any disputes between nations and countries, neither by my writings, nor, indeed, by serving any country. I cannot take part in all those affairs which are based on the distinction of countries, —

neither in custom-houses and collections of taxes, nor in the preparation of projectiles or ordnance, nor in any activity of arming, nor in military service, nor, indeed, in any war itself with other nations, — and I cannot contribute to this, that men should do so.

I understand wherein my good consists, I believe in it, and so I cannot do what unquestionably deprives me of my good.

But I not only believe in this, that I must live so, — I believe that if I live so my life will receive the only possible rational, joyous meaning which is not destroyed by death.

I believe that the rational life — my light — is given me for no other purpose than that I may shine before men, not with words, but with good deeds, in order that men may glorify the Father (Matt. v. 16). I believe that my life and my knowledge of the truth is the talent given me to work on, and that this talent is the fire which is a fire only when it burns. I believe that I am Nineveh in relation to other Jonahs, from whom I have learned the truth, and that I am also Jonah in relation to other Ninevites, to whom I must transmit the truth. I believe that the only meaning of my life consists in living in the light which is within me, and in not putting it under a bushel, but holding it high before all men, so that all men may see it. And this faith gives me new strength in the execution of Christ's teaching, and destroys all those obstacles which formerly stood before me.

What formerly vitiated in me the truth and practicableness of Christ's teaching, what repelled me from it, — the possibility of deprivations, sufferings, and death at the hands of people who did not know Christ's teaching, — now confirmed for me the truth of the teaching and led me to it.

Christ said, When you raise up the son of man, you will all of you be attracted to me, and I felt that I was irrepressibly attracted to him. He also said, The truth will free you, and I felt myself absolutely free.

An enemy will come to make war, or simply bad people will attack me, I used to think, and if I shall not defend myself, they will rob us, and will disgrace, torture, and kill me and my neighbours, and that seemed terrible to me; but now everything which formerly used to trouble me appeared to me joyful and confirmed the truth. Now I know that the enemies and so-called malefactors and robbers are all men, just such sons of man as I am; that they love the good and hate the evil just like me, and that like me they seek salvation and will find it only in Christ's teaching. Every evil which they will do me will be an evil for themselves as well, and so they must do me good. But if the truth is not known to them and they do evil, considering it good, then I know the truth for the very purpose that I may show it to those who do not know it; but I cannot show it to them otherwise than by renouncing participation in the evil, and by confessing the truth through deeds.

The enemies will come, — Germans, Turks, savages, — and if we shall not fight, they will kill us all. That is not true. If there existed a society of Christians who did no wrong to any one, and who gave the whole surplus of their labour to other people, no enemies, — neither Germans, nor Turks, nor savages, — would kill or torture such people. They would take everything which these would give them anyway, since they know no distinction between a Russian, a German, a Turk, and a savage. But if Christians find themselves amidst a non-Christian society, which defends itself by means of war, there appears here for the Christian the possibility of aiding the men who do not know the truth. A Christian knows the truth for the very reason that he may bear witness to it before those who do not know it; but he cannot bear witness to it in any other way than by acts, and his acts consist in renouncing war and doing good to people, without the distinction between so-called enemies and his own people.

But it is not the enemies, but evil men from among his neighbours, who will attack the Christian's family, and if he does not defend himself, they will rob, torture, and kill him and his family. That again is not true. If all the members of the family are Christians, and so put all their lives in the service of others, there will not be found a man so senseless as to deprive of sustenance or kill the people who serve him. Miklúkho-Makláy settled among the most beastly of savages, as they say, and the savages not only did not kill him, but loved him and submitted to him for no other reason than that he was not afraid of them, asked nothing of them, and did them good. But if a Christian lives among a non-Christian family and relatives, who defend themselves and their property by the exercise of force, and the Christian is called to take part in this defence, this call is for him a call for the exercise of his life's work. A Christian knows the truth for the very purpose that he may show it to others and most of all to his nearest friends who are connected with him by ties of family relationship and of friendship; and a Christian cannot show the truth otherwise than by avoiding to fall into the error into which others have fallen, by avoiding to side either with the attackers or with the defenders, and giving everything to others and showing by his life that he needs nothing but the execution of God's will, and that he fears nothing but the departure from it.

But the government cannot permit a member of society to decline to recognize the foundations of the political order and to refuse to execute the obligations of all citizens. The government will ask a Christian to take an oath, to participate in the court and in military service, and for a refusal will subject him to punishment, exile, incarceration, and even capital punishment. Again, this demand of the government will be for the Christian nothing but a call for him to execute his life's work. For a Christian the demand of the government is a demand of men who do not know the truth, and so a Christian, who knows it, cannot help but bear witness to it before men, who do not know it. The violence, imprisonment, capital punishment, to which a Christian is subject in consequence of it, give him the possibility of bearing witness, not in words, but in deeds. All violence, — war, rapine, executions, — is caused, not by the irrational forces of Nature, but by men who err and are deprived of the knowledge of the truth. And so, the more wrong these men do to a Christian, the farther are they removed from the truth, the unhappier they are, and the more do they need the knowledge of the truth. Now a Christian cannot transmit the knowledge of the truth to others in any other way than by refraining from that error in which men are when they do evil to him, and by paying good for evil. In this alone does all the work of a Christian's life and its whole meaning consist, and this is not destroyed by death.

Men who are united with one another through deception form, as it were, a solid mass. The solidarity of this mass is the evil of the world. All rational activity of humanity is directed to the destruction of this cohesive force of deceit.

All revolutions are attempts at a violent cleavage of this mass. People imagine that if they can break up this mass, it will no longer be a mass, and so they strike at it; but in their attempt to break it, they only forge it more solidly; the cohesion of the particles will not be destroyed so long as the internal force is not communicated to the particles of the mass, causing them to be separated from it.

The force of the cohesion of men is the lie, the deception. The force which liberates each particle of the human cohesion is truth. Truth is not communicated to people except by works of truth.

Nothing but works of truth, by introducing the light into the consciousness of each man, destroy the cohesion of the deceit, tear men one after another away from the mass which is connected through the cohesion of deceit.

This work has been going on for eighteen hundred years.

Ever since Christ's commandments were placed before humanity, this work has been, and it will not end till all be fulfilled, as Christ says (Matt. v. 18).

The church, which was formed from those who wanted to unite men by affirming with oaths that they were in the truth, has long been dead. But the church which is formed of men, not by promises, nor by anointment, but by deeds of truth and of the good united into one, has always lived and will always live. This church, as before, so even now, is formed, not of men who exclaim, Lord, Lord! and do unrighteousness (Matt. vii. 21, 22), but of men who hear these words and do them.

The men of this church know that their life is good when they do not violate the union with the son of man, and that this good is violated only by the non-observance of Christ's commandments, and so the men of this church cannot help but do these commandments and teach others to do them.

Whether there be few such men, or many, this is the church, which no one can overcome and which all men will join.

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke xii. 32).

MOSCOW, *January 22, 1884.*

ON LIFE

1888

ON LIFE

L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, parce qu'il sait qu'il meurt : et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien. Ainsi, toute notre dignité consiste dans la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever, non de l'espace et de la durée. Travaillons donc a bien penser : voilà le principe de la morale. —*Pascal.*

Zwei Dinge erfüllen mir das Gemüth mit immer neuer und zunehmender Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, je öfter und anhaltender sich das Nachdenken damit beschäftigt : der bestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesetz in mir. . . . Das erste fängt von dem Platze an, den ich in der äussern Sinnenwelt einnehme, und erweitert die Verknüpfung, darin ich stehe, ins unabsehlich Grosse mit Welten über Welten und Systemen von Systemen, überdem noch in grenzenlose Zeiten ihrer periodischen Bewegung, deren Anfang und Fortdauer. Das zweite fängt von meinem unsichtbaren Selbst, meiner Persönlichkeit, an, und stellt mich in einer Welt dar, die wahre Unendlichkeit hat, aber nur dem Verstande spürbar ist, und mit welcher ich mich, nicht wie dort in bloss zufälliger, sondern allgemeiner und nothwendiger Verknüpfung erkenne. — *Kant* (*Krit. der pract. Vern. Beschluss*).

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. — *John xiii. 34.*

INTRODUCTION

Let us imagine a man, whose only means of support is a mill. He is the son and the grandson of a miller, and knows well by tradition how to manage the mill in all its details, so that it may grind properly. Not knowing any mechanics, this man fixed, the best way he could, the various parts of the mill, so as to have it grind well, and he lived and earned his sustenance.

But this man happened to reflect on the construction of the mill, having heard some indistinct talks about mechanics, and began to observe what made the different parts move.

From the rynd to the millstone, from the millstone to the axletree, from the axletree to the wheel, from the wheel to the sluice, the dam, and the water, he reached a point when he saw clearly that the whole matter was in the dam and the river. And he rejoiced so much at this discovery that, instead of testing the quality of the milling, as he had done before, and accordingly raising or lowering the millstones and clamping them, and tightening and releasing the belt, he began to study the river. And so the mill began to run down. He was told that he was not doing right, but he disputed with such men, and continued to reflect on the river. And he busied himself so long and so assiduously with this, and so warmly and continually disputed with those who showed him the irregularity of his method of reasoning, that at last he convinced himself that the river was the mill.

To all the proofs of the incorrectness of his reflections such a miller will reply: "No mill grinds without water; consequently, in order that we may know the mill, we must know how to regulate the water, and what the force of its motion is, and whence it comes, — consequently, in order that we may know the mill, we must be acquainted with the river."

Logically the miller's reflection is unanswerable. The only means of bringing him out of his error is to show him that in all reasoning it is not so much the reasoning that is of importance, as the place occupied by the reasoning, that is, that for fruitful reasoning it is first of all necessary to know what to reason about at first, and what later; to show him that a rational activity differs from an irrational one only in this, that the rational activity classifies its reflections in the order of their importance, as to which is to be the first, the second, the third, the tenth, and so forth, while an irrational activity consists in reasoning without this order. It is necessary to show him this also that the determination of this order is not accidental, but depends on the end for which this process of reasoning is taking place.

The end of the reasoning determines the order in which the separate reflections are to be grouped in order that they may be sensible; and a reflection which is not connected with the general aim of all the reflections is irrational, no matter how logical it may be.

The end of the miller is to have good milling, and this end, if he does not lose sight of it, will determine for him the unquestionable order and the consecutiveness of his reflections about the millstones, the wheel, the dam, and the river.

But without this relation to the end of the reflections, the reflections of the miller, no matter how logical and beautiful they may be, will in themselves be irregular and, above all, void: they will be similar to the reflections of Kífa Mokiévich, who tried to reason out what the shell of an elephant's egg would be, if elephants were hatched out of eggs, like birds.

Precisely such, in my opinion, are the reflections of our contemporary science about life.

Life is the mill which a man wants to investigate. The mill is needed that it may grind well, and life is needed only that it may be good. This end of the investigation a man cannot for a minute abandon with impunity. If he abandons it, his reflections will inevitably lose their place and become like Kífa Mokiévich's reflections as to what kind of powder is needed in order to crack the shell of an elephant egg.

A man investigates life only to make it better, and thus has life been investigated by those who have advanced humanity on the path of science. But, by the side of these true teachers and benefactors of humanity, there have always been reasoners who abandon the end of the reflections, and instead trouble themselves with the question as to what causes life, what makes the mill go. Some say it is the water; others, that it is the construction. The dispute waxes hot, and the subject under discussion is removed farther and farther, and gives way entirely to foreign matters.

There is an ancient jest about the dispute of a Jew and a Christian. The story tells how the Christian, replying to the intricate cunning of the Jew, struck the Jew's bald spot with the palm of his hand, so as to produce a smacking sound, and then put the question: "What made it smack? The hand or the bald spot?" And so the dispute about faith gave way to a new, insoluble question.

Something similar has since the most ancient times taken place in relation to the question about life, by the side of the real knowledge of men.

Since the most ancient times there have been known the reflections as to whence life comes, whether from an immaterial principle or from various combinations of matter. These reflections have been continued up to the present time, so that no end of them can be foreseen, because the end of all these reflections has been abandoned, and they discuss life independently of its end, and by the word life no longer understand life, but only that from which it comes, or that which accompanies it.

Speaking now of life, not only in scientific books, but also in private conversations, they do not speak of the life which we all know, of which I am conscious through those sufferings which I fear and hate, and through those joys and pleasures which I wish, but of something which may have originated from the play of accident according to some physical laws, or, perhaps, because it has some mysterious cause.

Now they ascribe the word *life* to something disputable, which has not in itself the chief symptoms of life, the consciousness of suffering and enjoyment, the striving after the good.

"La vie est l'ensemble des fonctions, qui resistent à la mort. La vie est l'ensemble des phénomènes, qui se succèdent pendant un temps limité dans un être organisé."

"Life is a double process of decomposition and composition, general and at the same time uninterrupted. Life is a certain combination of heterogeneous modifications taking place consecutively. Life is an organism in action. Life is an especial activity of an organic substance. Life is an adaptation of internal to external relations."

Not to speak of the inaccuracies and tautologies in which all these definitions teem, their essence is always the same, namely, what is defined is not what all men alike indisputably understand by the word *life*, but certain processes, which accompany life and other phenomena.

The majority of these definitions are applicable to the forming crystal; some of these definitions are applicable to the activity of fermentation and decomposition, and all of them apply equally to the life of each separate cell of my body, for which there exists nothing, — neither good nor bad. A few processes, which take place in the crystals, in the protoplasm, in the nucleus of the protoplasm, in the cells of my body and of other bodies, are called by the name which in me is inseparably connected with the consciousness of striving after my good.

The discussion of certain conditions of life as of life is like the discussion of the river as of the mill. These discussions may be very necessary for some purposes, but they do not touch the subject which they are to discuss. Thus, all the conclusions about life which are deduced from these discussions, cannot help but be false.

The word *life* is very short and very clear, and everybody knows what it means; but even because all know what it means, we are obliged always to use it in this universally intelligible significance. This word is intelligible to all, not because it is very accurately defined by other words and concepts, but, on the contrary, because this word signifies a fundamental concept, from which many other, if not all, concepts are deduced, and so, to make our deductions from this concept, we are obliged above all else to accept it in its central, indubitable meaning. But this, it seems to me, has been overlooked by the disputants in relation to the concept of life. What has happened is, that the fundamental concept of life, which in the beginning was not taken in its central meaning, on account of the disputes departed more and more from the accepted central meaning, finally lost its fundamental meaning, and received another, improper meaning. What has happened is that the centre, from which the figure was described, has been abandoned and transferred to a new point.

They dispute whether there is life in a cell or a protoplasm, or even lower down, in inorganic matter. But, before disputing, we ought to ask ourselves whether we have the right to ascribe the concept of life to the cell.

We say, for example, that there is life in the cell, that the cell is a living being, whereas the fundamental concept of human life and that of the life which is found in the cell are two concepts which are not only quite distinct, but which cannot in any way be connected. One concept excludes the other. I discover that my body, without a residue, is all composed of cells. These cells, I am told, have also the property of life like myself, and are just such a living being as I am; but I recognize myself as living only because I am conscious of myself with all my cells, of which I am composed, as of one inseparable living being. Now I am told that all of me, without any residue, is composed of cells. To what do I ascribe the property of life, to the cells, or to myself? If I admit that the cells have life, I must from the concept of life abstract the chief symptom of my life, — the consciousness of self as one living being; but if I admit that I have life as a separate being, it is obvious that I can in no way ascribe the same properties to the cells, of which my whole body is composed, and of the consciousness of which I know nothing.

Either I live, and there are in me non-living particles, called cells, or there is in me a conglomeration of living cells, and my consciousness of life is not life, but an illusion.

We do not say that in the cell there is something which is called *trife*, but say that it is life. We say life, because by this word we do not mean some X, but a well-defined quantity, which we all call by the same name and know only from within ourselves, as a consciousness of ourselves with our one, inseparable body, — and so such a concept is not applicable to those cells of which my body is composed.

No matter with what investigations and observations a man may busy himself, — he is obliged, for the expression of his observations, to understand by each word what is indisputably understood in the same way by all men, and not employ a concept, which he needs, but which in no way coincides with the fundamental, universally intelligible concept. If it is possible so to employ the word life that it expresses indiscriminately the quality of the whole subject and entirely different qualities of all its component parts, as is the case with the cell and the animal consisting of cells, then it is possible so to employ other words as well: for example, it is possible to say that, since all thoughts consist of words, and words of letters, and letters of strokes, the drawing of strokes is the same as an exposition of ideas, and so strokes may be called ideas.

It is, for example, a most common phenomenon in the scientific world to hear and read reflections about the origin of life from the play of physical, mechanical forces.

Almost the majority of scientific men hold to this — I find it hard to express myself — opinion, no, not opinion, paradox, to this joke or riddle, I might say.

They affirm that life is due to the play of physical and mechanical forces, — those physical forces, which we called physical and mechanical only in contradistinction to the concept of life.

It is obvious that the word *life*, incorrectly applied to concepts foreign to it, by departing more and more from its fundamental meaning has in this significance been removed from its centre to such an extent that life is assumed to be where, according to our conceptions, life cannot be. It is as though they asserted that there is a circle or sphere whose centre is outside its periphery.

Indeed, life, which I cannot present to myself otherwise than as a striving from bad to good, takes place in a territory where I can see neither bad nor good. Obviously the centre of the concept of life has been entirely transposed. Moreover, following the investigations of this something, called life, I see that these investigations touch on concepts which are scarcely known to me. I see a whole series of new concepts and words, which have their conventional significance in scientific language, but which have nothing in common with existing concepts.

The concept of life, as I understand it, is not understood in the same way in which all understand it, and the concepts deduced from it also fail to agree with the customary concepts; there appear instead new, conventional concepts, which receive corresponding invented appellations.

Human language is more and more pushed out from scientific investigations, and instead of the word, as a means of expressing existing objects, they enthrone a scientific Volapük, which differs from the real Volapük in that the latter has general words for existing objects and concepts, whereas the first, the scientific Volapük, applies non-existing words to non-existing concepts.

The only means for the mental intercourse of men is the word, and, to make this intercourse possible, words have to be used in such a way as to evoke in all men corresponding and exact concepts. But if it is possible to use words at random, and to understand by them anything we may think of, it is better not to speak at all, but to indicate everything by signs.

I will admit that to define the laws of the world from mere deductions of the mind, without experience and observation, is a false and unscientific way, that is, one that cannot give any true knowledge; but if we were to study the phenomena of the world by experiment and observation, and yet were guided in these experiments and observations by concepts which are neither fundamental nor common to all, but by conventional ones, and were to describe the results of these experiments with words to which different meanings may be attached, would not that be still worse? The best apothecary shop would be productive of the greatest harm, if the labels were pasted on the bottles, not according to their contents, but as the apothecary might choose.

But I shall be told: "Science does not propose to investigate the whole totality of life (including in it will, the desire of good, and the spiritual world); it abstracts from the concept of life such phenomena only as are subject to its experimental investigations."

This would be beautiful and legitimate. But we know that this is not at all the case in the conception of the men of science of our time. If they first recognized the concept of life in its central meaning, in the way all understand it, and if then it were clearly shown that science, having abstracted from this concept all sides but one, which is subject to external observation, views the phenomena from this one side alone, for which it has methods of investigation peculiar to it, then it would be beautiful, and an entirely different matter: in that case the place which science would occupy and the results at which we should arrive on the basis of science would be quite different. They ought to say what is, and not conceal what we all know. Do we not know that the majority of the experimental scientific investigators of life are fully convinced that they are not studying one side of life alone, but all life?

Astronomy, mechanics, physics, chemistry, and all the other sciences taken together, and each separately, work out the particular side of life subject to them, without arriving at any results about life in general. Only in the times of their crudity, that is, of their obscurity and indefiniteness, some of these sciences endeavoured from their point of view to embrace all the phenomena of life, and went astray in their attempts at inventing new concepts and words. Thus it was with astronomy, when it was astrology, and thus it was with chemistry, when it was alchemy. The same is now taking place with that experimental evolutionary science which, analyzing one side or several sides of life, makes pretensions that it is studying the whole of life.

Men with such a false view of their science will not recognize that only a few sides of life are subject to their investigations; they affirm that the whole of life with all its manifestations will be investigated by them by means of external experiment.

"If," they say, "psychics" (they are fond of this indefinite word of their Volapük) "is still unknown to us, it will be known some day. By investigating one or several sides of vital phenomena we learn all sides, that is, in other words, if we shall for a very long time and very assiduously look at an object from one side, we shall see the object from all sides, and even from the middle."

However surprising this strange doctrine is, which can be explained only by the fanaticism of superstition, it exists and, like any fanatical doctrine, produces its disastrous effect in that it directs the activity of the human mind upon a false and useless path. It is the ruin of conscientious workers, who devote their life to the study of what is almost unnecessary; it is the ruin of the material forces of men, in that they are turned into the wrong direction; it is the ruin of the young generations, which are directed upon the most useless activity of a Kífa Mokiévich, advanced to the degree of the highest service of humanity.

They usually say that science studies life from all its sides; but the trouble is that every object has as many sides as there are radii in a sphere, that is, an endless number, and that it is not possible to study it from all sides, but we must know from which side it is more important and necessary, and from which it is less important and less necessary. Just as it is impossible to approach an object from all sides at once, so it is impossible to study all the phenomena of life from all sides at once. The consecutiveness establishes itself in a natural manner, and in this lies the whole matter. This consecutiveness presents itself only through the comprehension of life.

Nothing but a correct comprehension of life gives the proper meaning and direction to science in general and each science in particular, distributing them according to the importance of their significance in respect to life. But if the comprehension of life is not such as is inherent in us, the science itself will be false.

Not what we shall call science will define life, but our conception of life will determine what must be regarded as science; and so, in order that science may be science, we must first solve the question as to what is science, and what not; but, to do this, the concept of life must be made clear.

I will frankly express my idea: we all know the fundamental dogma of faith of this false experimental science. There exists matter and its energy. Energy moves; the mechanical motion passes into molecular motion, and is expressed by heat, electricity, and nerve and brain activity. All phenomena of life without any exception are explained as relations of energies. Everything is so beautiful, simple, clear, and, above all, convenient. And so, if what you desire so much and what so simplifies your whole life does not exist, it has all to be invented in some way.

And so here is my whole bold idea: the chief portion of energy, of the impassioned activity of experimental science, is based on the desire to invent all that is needed for the confirmation of so convenient a conception.

In the whole activity of this science one sees not so much the desire to investigate the phenomena of life, as the one, ever present anxiety to prove the correctness of one's fundamental dogma. What energy has been wasted on the attempts to prove the origin of the organic from the inorganic and of the psychical activity from the progresses of the organism!

The inorganic does not pass into the organic: let us search at the bottom of the sea, — we shall find there a thing which we shall call a nucleus, a moneron. It is not there either: let us believe that it will be found, the more so since we have at our service a whole infinitude of ages, whither we can cram down everything which ought to exist according to our belief, but does not exist in reality.

The same is true of the transition from the organic activity into the psychic. We haven't it? We believe that it will be, and all the efforts of the mind are directed toward proving at least the possibility of it.

The discussions of what has no reference to life, namely whence life comes, — whether it is animism, or vitalism, or the concept of some special force, — have concealed from men the chief question of life, that question without which the concept of life loses its meaning, and have slowly brought the men of science, — those who ought to lead others, — to the condition of a man who is walking, and is even in a hurry, but has forgotten whither he is going.

But, maybe, I intentionally try not to see those enormous results which science gives in its present direction. However, no results whatever can change its false direction. Let us assume the impossible: that that which modern science wishes to find out about life, of which it asserts (though it does not believe so) that it will all be revealed, — let us assume that it is all revealed and as clear as day. It is clear how through adaptation the organic is born out of inorganic matter, and how physical energies pass into feelings, will, thought, and all this is known not only to gymnasiasts, but also to village schoolboys.

I know that certain thoughts and feelings are due to such and such motions. What of it? Can I guide these motions, or not, in order that I may evoke in myself a given series of thoughts? But the question as to what thoughts and feelings I must evoke in myself and in others remains not only unsolved, but even untouched.

I know that the men of science find no difficulty in answering this question. The solution of this question seems very simple to them, as simple as the solution of a difficult question appears to a man who does not understand it. The solution of the question as to how life is to be arranged, when it is in our power, seems very simple to the men of science. They say: " Arrange it in such a way that men may be able to gratify their needs; science works out the means, in the first place, for regularly distributing the gratification of needs, and in the second, for producing so much and so easily that all needs may be easily gratified, and then all men will be happy."

But if you ask what is meant by need, and what the limits of needs are, they reply to this simply: "That is what science is for, — to classify the needs into physical, mental, æsthetical, even moral needs, and clearly to define what needs are legitimate, and to what extent, and what are illegitimate, and to what extent. Some day it will determine all that."

But if you ask what one is to be guided by in the determination of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of these needs, they answer boldly: "By the study of the needs."

But the word *need* has only two meanings, — either that of a condition of existence, and of conditions of existence of any object there is an endless number, and so all conditions cannot be studied; or that of the living being's demand of the good, which is cognized and determined by consciousness alone, and so can still less be studied by experimental science.

There is an institution, a corporation, or an assemblage of men or minds, which is infallible and is called science. This science will determine all that at some future time.

Is it not evident that all this solution of the question is only a paraphrased kingdom of the Messiah, in which science plays the rôle of the Messiah, and that, in order that such an explanation may explain anything, it is necessary to believe in the dogmas of science as unconditionally as the Jews believe in the Messiah, which the orthodox men of science actually do, — but with this difference: an orthodox Jew, who sees in the Messiah a messenger of God, can believe that he will arrange everything excellently by dint of his power, while an orthodox man of science by the nature of the thing cannot believe that it is possible by means of an external study of the needs to solve the chief and only question of life.

I.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION OF HUMAN LIFE

Every man lives only that he may feel well, — for his own good. If he does not feel the desire of good for himself, he does not feel himself living. Man cannot present to himself life without the desire of good for himself. To live is for every man the same as to wish and obtain the good; to wish and obtain the good is the same as to live.

Man feels life only in himself, in his personality, and so man imagines at first that the good which he wishes is only the good of his personality. At first it seems to him that only he lives, lives truly. The life of other beings does not at all present itself to him like his own, — it presents itself to him only as a semblance of life; the life of other beings man knows only from observation, and only through observation does he know that they live. Of the life of other beings man knows when he wants to think of them; but of himself he knows at all times, and so each man sees his own life only as the real life. The life of other beings, which surround him, presents itself to him only as one of the conditions of his existence. If he does not wish others any evil, he refrains from doing so because the sight of the sufferings of others impairs his welfare. If he wishes others well, he does not do so in the same way as to himself, — not that he whom he wishes well may fare well, but that the good of the other beings may increase the good of his own life. What is important and necessary for man is the good in that life which he feels his own, that is, his good.

Now, while striving to attain his good, man observes that this good depends on other beings, and, observing these other beings, he sees that all of them — both men and animals — have precisely the same conception of life which he has. Each of these beings, like him, feels only its own life and its own good, and regards only its own life as important and real, and the life of all the other beings only as a means for its own good. Man sees that each of the living beings must be prepared, like himself, for the sake of its little good, to deprive of a greater good and even of life all the other beings, and among them him, as a reasoning man. Having comprehended this, man involuntarily reflects that if this is so, — and he knows that it is indubitably so, — not one being, and not a dozen beings, but all the endless creatures of the world are prepared, each for the attainment of its own good, at any moment to destroy him, for whom alone life exists. Having comprehended this, man sees that his personal good, in which alone he understands his life, is not only not easy of acquisition, but will certainly be taken from him.

The longer a man lives, the more this reflection is confirmed by experience, and he sees that the life of the world, in which he takes part, and which is composed of interrelated individuals that wish to destroy and devour one another, not only cannot be a good for him, but certainly is a great evil.

More than this: even if a man is placed in such favourable conditions that he can successfully struggle against other individuals, without fearing for himself, reason and experience will show him very soon that even those semblances of good which he snatches away from life, in the form of enjoyments of personality, are not any good, but, as it were, only samples of good, given to him solely that he may the more sensibly feel the sufferings which are always connected with the enjoyments. The longer a man lives, the more clearly does he see that the enjoyments grow less and less, and the ennui, satiety, labours, and sufferings more and more.

More than this: as he begins to experience a weakening of his forces and diseases, and contemplates the sickness, old age, and death of other men, he cannot fail to observe that his own existence, in which alone he feels real, full life, is with every hour, with every motion approaching debility, old age, and death; that his life, in addition to being subject to thousands of casualties of destruction by other beings that are struggling with him, and to ever increasing sufferings, by its very essence is only an unceasing approach to death, to that condition in which, together with the life of the individual, there will certainly be destroyed every possibility of any good of personality whatsoever. Man sees that he, his personality, — that in which alone he feels life, — does nothing but struggle against what it is impossible to struggle against, against the whole world; that he is seeking enjoyments which give only a semblance of good and always end in suffering, and wishes to retain life, which it is impossible to retain. He sees that he himself, his personality, — that for which alone he wishes the good and life, — can have neither good nor life. And that which he wishes to have, the good and life, is possessed only by those beings, foreign to him, whom he does not feel and cannot feel, and of whose existence he neither can nor wishes to know.

What is most important to him and what alone he needs, what, as he thinks, lives the only real life, his personality, will perish and be bones and worms, — not he; and what he does not need and is of no importance to him, what he does not feel as living, all that world of struggling and alternating beings, is the real life, and will remain and live for ever. Thus the only life of which man is conscious, for which all his activity takes place, turns out to be delusive and impossible, while the life outside him, which he does not love or feel, and which is unknown to him, is the one true life.

Only what he does not feel has those properties which he would like to have. And this is not something which so presents itself to man in the bad moments of his gloomy mood, it is not a conception without which one can get along, but, on the contrary, such an obvious, indubitable truth that, as soon as this thought strikes a man, or is explained to him by others, he never gets rid of it, and will never eradicate it from his consciousness.

II.

THE CONTRADICTION OF LIFE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY MEN SINCE REMOTE ANTIQUITY. THE ENLIGHTENERS OF HUMANITY HAVE REVEALED TO MEN THE DEFINITIONS OF LIFE, WHICH SOLVE THIS INTERNAL CONTRADICTION, BUT THE PHARISEES AND THE SCRIBES CONCEAL THEM FROM MEN

THE sole aim of life, as it first presents itself to man, is the good of his personality, but there can be no good for the personality; even if there were anything in life that resembled the good, life, in which alone the good would be possible, the life of the personality, by every motion, every breath, is irresistibly drawn to sufferings, to evil, to death, to annihilation.

This is so obvious and so clear that every thinking man, whether he be young or old, cultured or uneducated, sees it. This reflection is so simple and so natural that it presents itself to every rational man, and has been known to humanity since remote antiquity.

"The life of man, as an individual striving only after its good, amidst an endless number of similar individuals, which destroy one another and themselves, is evil and senseless, and the true life cannot be such." Thus has man said to himself since antiquity, and this internal contradiction of man's life has with extraordinary force and clearness been expressed by Hindoo, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, and Hebrew sages; and since antiquity man's mind has been directed to the cognition of such a good as would not be destroyed by the struggle of the beings among themselves, by sufferings, and by death. The whole progress of humanity, ever since we know its life, consists in the ever growing elucidation of this good of man, which is not impaired by struggle, suffering, and death.

Since most remote times and among the different nations, the great teachers of humanity have revealed to men ever clearer definitions of life, which solve its internal contradiction, and have pointed out to them the true good and the true life that are proper for man. Since the position of men in the world is the same for all men, and, therefore, the contradiction between his striving after his personal good and the consciousness of its impossibility is the same also, all the definitions of the true good and, therefore, of the true life, as revealed to men by the greatest minds of humanity, are by their essence the same.

"Life is the dissemination of that light which came down from heaven for the good of men," Confucius said, six hundred years before Christ.

"Life is a wandering and perfecting of the souls attaining a greater and ever greater good," said the Brahmins of about the same time.

"Life is self-renunciation for the sake of attaining blissful Nirvana," said Buddha, a contemporary of Confucius.

"Life is the path of humility and abasement for the sake of attaining the good," said Lao-tse, another contemporary of Confucius.

"Life is that which God blew into the nostrils of man, in order that he, fulfilling the law, might attain the good," says the Jewish wisdom.

"Life is subjection to reason, which gives men the good," said the Stoics.

"Life is love of God and of our neighbour, which gives man the good," said Christ, including all the former definitions into his own.

Such are the definitions of life, which, pointing out to men the true, indestructible good in the place of the false and impossible good of personality, have thousands of years before us solved the contradiction of human life, and given a rational meaning to it. We may fail to agree with these definitions of life; we may assume that these definitions can be expressed more exactly and more clearly, but we cannot help seeing that these definitions are such that the recognition of them, destroying the contradiction of life and putting in place of the striving after the unattainable good of personality another striving, — after the good which is not destroyed by suffering and death, — gives a rational meaning to life. We cannot help seeing that these definitions, being theoretically correct, are also confirmed by the experience of life, and that millions and millions of people, who have recognized such definitions of life, have in fact shown the possibility of substituting for the striving after the good of the personality the other striving after the good which is not impaired by suffering and by death.

But besides these men, who have comprehended the definitions of life, as revealed to men by the great enlighteners of humanity, and who have lived by it, there has always existed a large majority of men, who at a given period of life, and at times during their whole life, have lived nothing but an animal life, not only failing to understand those definitions which serve as a solution of the contradiction of human life, but not even seeing that contradiction which they solve. There have always been men among them who, on account of their external, exclusive position, have considered themselves called to guide humanity, and, themselves failing to comprehend the meaning of human life, have taught other men the life which they do not understand, namely, that human life is nothing but personal existence.

Such false teachers have existed at all times and exist even at present. They profess in words the teachings of those enlighteners of humanity, in whose traditions they have been educated, but, failing to comprehend their rational meaning, they turn these doctrines into supernatural revelations of the past and the future life of men and demand only the execution of rites. This is the teaching of the Pharisees in the broadest sense, that is, of men who teach that the life which is in itself irrational may be mended by faith in another life, which is obtained by the execution of external rites.

Others, who do not recognize the possibility of any other than the visible life, deny all miracles and everything supernatural, and boldly assert that man's life is nothing but his animal existence from his birth to his death. It is the teaching of the scribes, of men who teach that in the life of man, as of an animal, there is nothing irrational.

The two classes of false teachers have always waged war among themselves, though the doctrines of either class are based on the same gross understanding of the fundamental contradiction of human life. Both doctrines hold sway in our world and, making war on one another, fill the world with their disputes, thus concealing from men those definitions of life which reveal the path to the true good of men, which were given humanity thousands of years ago.

The Pharisees, by not understanding the definition of life which is given to men by those teachers in the traditions in which they are brought up, substitute for it their false interpretations of the future life, and at the same time try to conceal from men the definitions of life of the other enlighteners of humanity, by presenting them to their disciples in their grossest and most cruel distortion, hoping in this way to support the exclusive authority of the teaching on which they base their interpretations.[1]

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[1] The unity of the rational meaning of the definition of life by the other enlighteners of humanity does not present itself to them as the best proof of the truth of their teaching, since it shatters the trust in those irrational false interpretations which they substitute for the essence of the teaching. — *Author's Note.*

But the scribes, who do not even suspect in the Pharisaical teachings those rational foundations from which they arose, deny outright all the doctrines of the future life, and boldly affirm that all these doctrines have no foundation whatever, and are only survivals of coarse customs of ignorance, and that the progress of humanity consists in putting no questions of life which exceed the limits of the animal existence of man.

III.

THE DELUSIONS OF THE SCRIBES

How wonderful! The fact that all the teachings of the great minds of humanity so awed men by their greatness that rude people generally ascribed to them a supernatural character and recognized their founders as demigods, — which serves as the chief token of the importance of these teachings, — serves for the scribes, so they think, as the best proof of the irregularity and obsoleteness of these teachings. The fact that the unimportant teachings of Aristotle, Bacon, Comte, and others have always remained the possession of a small number of their readers and admirers, and on account of their falseness never could have influenced the masses, and so were not subjected to superstitious distortions and increments, is taken as a proof of their truth. But the teachings of the Brahmins, of Buddha, Zoroaster, Lao-tse, Confucius, Isaiah, Christ, are regarded as superstitions and delusions, only because these teachings have transformed the lives of millions.

They are not in the least troubled by the fact that billions of people have lived according to these superstitions, because even in their distorted form they give men answers to the questions as to the true good of life, and that these teachings are divided up, but even thus serve as the basis of reasoning of the best men of all ages, while the theories which are acknowledged by the scribes are divided by them alone, are always subjects of dispute, and often do not survive a decade, and are forgotten as quickly as they rise.

In nothing is the false direction of the science which modern society follows expressed with such clearness as in the place which in society is given to the teachings of those great teachers of life, by which humanity has lived and formed itself, and continues to live and form itself. In the almanacs it says, in the department of statistical data, that there are a thousand different creeds, which are now professed by the inhabitants of the globe. In these creeds are included Brahminism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity. There are a thousand creeds, and men of our time believe this statement quite sincerely. There are a thousand creeds, and they are all nonsense, so what need is there of studying them? And the men of our time consider it a shame if they do not know the last utterances of wisdom of Spencer, Helmholtz, and others, but of the Brahmins, of Buddha, Confucius, Lao-tse, Epictetus, Isaiah, they sometimes know the names, and sometimes they do not know even that. It does not even occur to them that there are not at all one thousand creeds in our day, but only three, — the Chinese, the Hindoo, and the Judæo-Christian (with its outgrowth, Mohammedanism), and that the books of these religions may be bought for five roubles and read in two weeks, and that in these books, by which all humanity, with the exception of seven per cent. of almost unknown people, has lived, is contained all the wisdom of man, all that which has made humanity such as it is.

But it is not merely the masses that do not know these teachings: the learned do not know them, if they do not happen to be their specialty; philosophers by profession do not consider it necessary to look inside these books. What sense is there in studying those men who have solved that which to a rational man is a contradiction of his life, and who have determined the true good and life of men? The scribes, who do not understand the contradiction which forms the principle of a rational life, affirm boldly that, since they do not see it, there is no contradiction, and that the life of man is only his animal existence.

Men who see understand and define what they see before themselves: a blind man pokes his cane in front of him, and affirms that there is nothing but what the feel of his cane tells him.

IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIBES SUBSTITUTES THE VISIBLE PHENOMENA OF HIS ANIMAL EXISTENCE FOR THE CONCEPT OF THE WHOLE LIFE OF MAN, AND FROM THESE MAKES HIS DEDUCTIONS AS TO THE AIM OF HIS LIFE

"LIFE is what is going on in the living being from its birth to its death. A man, a dog, a horse, is born; each of them has his individual body; this individual body lives, and then dies; the body will be decomposed, will enter into other beings, and the former being will be no more. There was life, and life has come to an end; the heart beats, the lungs breathe, the body does not fall apart, — consequently the man, the dog, the horse, lives; the heart stops beating, the breath ceases, the body begins to decompose, — death has come, and there is no life. Life, then, is that which takes place in the body of man, just as in that of an animal, in the interval between birth and death. What can be clearer?"

Thus the grossest, most ignorant people, who have just issued from the animal state, have always looked upon life. In our day the teaching of the scribes, which calls itself science, recognizes this same gross, primitive concept of life as the only true one. Making use of all those weapons of external knowledge, which humanity has acquired, this false teaching wants systematically to lead men back into that darkness of ignorance, from which it has for a thousand years tried with so much effort and labour to escape.

"We cannot define life in our consciousness," says this doctrine. "We lose ourselves, if we analyze it in ourselves. That concept of good, the striving after which in our consciousness forms our life, is an illusive phantom, and life cannot be understood in this consciousness. To understand life, we must observe its manifestations, as the motion of matter. Only from these observations and from the laws deduced from them shall we find the law of life itself and the law of the life of man."[1]

And so the false teaching, by substituting for the concept of the whole life of man, as known to him in his consciousness, its visible part, — animal existence, — begins to study these visible phenomena, at first in animal man, then in the animals in general, then in the plants, then in matter, asserting all the time that it is not certain manifestations of life that are studied, but life itself. The observations are so complex, so diversified, so mixed, and so much time and effort is wasted on them, that men by degrees forget their original mistake of assuming part of the subject as being the whole subject, and are fully convinced that the study of the visible properties of matter, of plants, and of animals is the study of life itself, which is cognized by man only in his consciousness.

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[1] The true science, which knows its place and, therefore, its subject, is modest and, therefore, powerful, and has never spoken in this way.

The science of physics speaks of the laws and relations of forces, without troubling itself with the question as to what force is, or trying to explain the essence of force. The science of chemistry speaks of the relations of matter, without troubling itself with the question what matter is, or trying to define its essence. The science of biology speaks of the forms of life, without troubling itself with the question as to what life is, or trying to define its essence. Force and matter and life are accepted by the true sciences not as objects of investigation, but as axiomatic points of support, which are taken from other fields of knowledge, and on which the structure of each separate science is reared. Thus true science looks upon the subject, and this science cannot have a deleterious influence upon the masses, turning them toward ignorance. But not thus does the falsely reasoning science look upon its subject. "We study matter and force and life; and since we study them, we can know them," they say, failing to consider that they are not studying matter, or force, or life, but only their relations and forms. — *Author's Note.*

What takes place is very much like what a man does who points to a shadow, wishing to sustain the delusion in which his spectators are.

"Look nowhere," says the demonstrator, "except where the reflections appear, and, above all, do not look at the object itself: there is no object, — there is only its reflection."

The same is done by the science of the scribes of our time, which pampers the vulgar crowd, when it views life without its chief definition, the striving after the good, which is revealed only in the consciousness of man.[1] Starting directly from the definition of life independently of the striving after the good, the false science observes the ends of the living beings, and, finding in them ends which are foreign to man, ascribe them to him.

As the end of the living beings there presents itself, with such an external observation, the preservation of one's personality, the preservation of species, the reproduction of one's like, and the struggle for existence, and this imaginary end of life is foisted upon man.

The false science, taking for its starting-point the obsolete conception of life, with which one cannot see that contradiction of human life, which forms its chief property, — this so-called science in its last deductions arrives at what the vulgar majority of humanity demands, — at the recognition of the possibility of good for the individual life alone, at the recognition of the animal existence alone as man's good.

The false science goes even beyond the demands of the vulgar crowd, for which it wants to find an explanation, — it arrives at the affirmation of what the rational consciousness of man rejects with its first gleam of intelligence,—it arrives at the conclusion that the life of man, as of any animal, consists in the struggle for the existence of personality, of the race, and of the species.[1]

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[1] See first appendix.

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[1] See second appendix.

V.

THE FALSE TEACHINGS OF THE PHARISEES AND OF THE SCRIBES DO NOT GIVE ANY EXPLANATIONS OF THE MEANING OF ACTUAL LIFE, NOR ANY GUIDANCE IN IT; AS THE ONLY GUIDE OF LIFE THERE APPEARS THE INERTIA OF LIFE, WHICH HAS NO RATIONAL EXPLANATION

"THERE is no need of defining life: everybody knows it. That is all, and so let us live!" say men in their delusion, being supported by the false teachings. And, as they do not know what life and its good is, they think that they live, as a man who is borne by the waves without any special direction may think that he is swimming whither he has to and wishes to swim.

A child is born in need or in luxury, and receives an education either of the Pharisees or of the scribes. For the child, for the youth, there does not yet exist the contradiction of life and the question about it, and so he needs neither the explanation of the Pharisees, nor that of the scribes, and they cannot guide his life. He learns only by the example of men who live about him, and this example, both of the Pharisees and of the scribes, is the same: both live only for the good of the personal life, and teach him the same.

If his parents are in need, he learns from them that the aim of life is the acquisition of more bread and money, and as little work as possible, so that the animal personality may fare as well as possible. If he was born in luxury, he learns that the aim of life is wealth and honours, so that one may pass the time with as much pleasure and jollity as possible.

All the knowledge which the poor man acquires is necessary for him, so that he may be able to improve the welfare of his personality. All the knowledge of science and of the arts which the rich man acquires is necessary for him only that he may be able to vanquish ennui and pass the time pleasantly. The longer each of them lives, the more strongly does the reigning view of the men of the world enter his flesh. They marry and raise a family, and the eagerness for acquiring the benefits of an animal existence is intensified by the justification of the family: the struggle with others becomes more acute, and there is established the habit (inertia) of life only for the good of the personality.

Even if a doubt as to the rationality of such a life should assail either the poor or the rich man; if either shall be confronted with the question, For what purpose is this aimless struggle for existence, which my children will continue, or for what purpose is this illusive chase after enjoyments, which end in suffering both for me and my children? there is hardly any possibility that he will find out those definitions of life which have long ago been given to humanity by its great teachers, who thousands of years ago were in the same condition as he. The teaching of the Pharisees and of the scribes screen them so firmly that only very few succeed in seeing them.

Some, the Pharisees, in reply to the question, "What is this miserable life for?" say, "Life is miserable and has always been so, and must always be so; the good of life is not in its present, but in its past, before life, and in its future, after life." The Brahmin, and the Buddhist, and the Taoist, and the Jewish, and the Christian Pharisees always say the same. "The present life is an evil, and the explanation of this evil is in the past, — in the appearance of the world and of man; but the correction of the existing evil is in the future, beyond the grave. Everything which man can do for the acquisition of the good is not in this life, but in the future: believe in the teaching which we impart to you, — fulfil the rites which we prescribe."

And the doubter, seeing in the lives of all men who live for their personal good, and in the lives of the Pharisees who live in the same way, the untruth of this explanation, and not grasping the meaning of their answer, simply does not believe them, and turns to the scribes.

"All the teachings about another life than the one which we see in the animal life is the fruit of ignorance," say the scribes. "All thy doubts in the rationality of thy life are idle dreams. The life of the worlds, the earth, the man, the animal, the plant has its laws, and we study them and investigate the origin of the worlds and of man, of the animals and plants, and of all matter; we also investigate what is in store for the worlds, when the sun cools off, and so forth, and what has been and will be with man and with every animal and plant. We can show and prove that everything has been and will be, as we say; our investigations, besides this, coöperate with the improvement of man's welfare. But of thy life, with thy striving after the good, we cannot tell thee anything, except what thou knowest without us: since thou livest, live in the best manner possible."

And the doubter, having received no answer whatsoever to his question, neither from the one nor from the other, remains, as he has been, without any guidance in life except the impulses of his personality.

Some of the doubters, saying to themselves, according to Pascal's reflection, "What if there is truth in that with which the Pharisees threaten us for the non-performance of their injunctions?" carry out, in their leisure time, all the injunctions of the Pharisees ("There will be no loss, and the gain may be great"), while others, agreeing with the scribes, deny outright any other life and all religious rites, and say to themselves, "Not I alone, but all men have lived in this manner, — what will be, will be." And this discrimination gives no advantage to either of them: they all remain without an explanation as to the meaning of the present life.

But one has to live.

Human life is a series of acts from rising to going to bed; every day a man has to choose out of hundreds of possible acts those which he will perform. Neither the teaching of the Pharisees, which explains the mysteries of the heavenly life, nor the teaching of the scribes, which investigates the origin of the worlds and of man, and which draws its conclusions as to their future fate, furnishes such a guide for his acts. And yet man cannot live without a guide in the choice of his acts, and so he involuntarily submits, not to reason, but to that external guide of life, which has always existed in every society of men.

This guide has no reasonable explanation, but yet it moves an enormous majority of the acts of all men. This guide is the habit of life of societies of men, which governs men the more powerfully the less men have the comprehension of the meaning of life. This guide cannot be expressed definitely, because it is composed of the greatest variety of acts and works, widely different in time and place. It is candles on the little boards of the parents for the Chinese; it is pilgrimages to certain places for a Mohammedan; it is a certain number of words in a prayer for a Hindoo; it is loyalty to his flag and the honour of the uniform for a soldier, the duel for a man of the world, the vendetta for the mountaineer; it is certain food for certain days, a certain education of one's children; it is visits, a certain furnishing of the apartments, a certain celebration of funerals, births, and weddings; it is an endless number of deeds and acts, which fill the whole life.

It is what is called decency, custom, but most frequently duty, and even sacred duty.

And it is to this guidance that the majority of men submit, in spite of the explanations of the Pharisees and the scribes. All about him and ever since childhood a man sees people who perform these acts with full assurance and external solemnity, and, as he has no rational explanation of his life, he not only begins to perform such acts, but tries to ascribe a rational meaning to these acts. He wants to believe that the men who perform these acts have an explanation as to why and for what purpose they do what they do. And so he begins to convince himself that these acts have a rational meaning and that the explanation of their meaning, though not known to him, is known to others. But the majority of other men, who themselves lack an explanation of life, are in precisely the same state in which he is. The only reason they perform the acts is that they think that others, having an explanation of these acts, demand them from them. Thus, involuntarily deceiving one another, men get more and more accustomed to performing acts which have no rational explanation, and even to ascribing to these acts a certain mysterious, incomprehensible meaning. The less they comprehend the meaning of the acts to be performed by them and the more doubtful these acts are in themselves, the more importance do they ascribe to them, and the more solemnly do they perform them.

The rich man and the poor perform what they see others around them do, and these acts they call their duty, their sacred duty, quieting themselves with the thought that that which has been done for so long a time, by so great a number of men, and is so highly esteemed by them, cannot help but be the real work of life. And up to a good old age, up to death, men live, trying to assure themselves that, if they themselves do not know what they live for, others do know it, — those others who know it just as little as those who depend on them.

New men come into existence, are born, grow up, and, looking at this hubbub of existence, called life, in which gray-haired, respected, revered old men take part, assure themselves that this senseless bustle is life, and that there is no other, and go away, having crowded a bit at its gate. Even so a man who has never seen an assembly, upon noticing a crowding, noisy, animated throng at the entrance, and deciding that this is that assembly, allows himself to be jostled at the door and returns home with crushed sides, and with the full assurance that he was in the assembly.

We cut through mountains, fly around the world; electricity, microscopes, telephones, wars, parliament, philanthropy, the struggle of parties, universities, learned societies, museums, — is not all that life ?

All the complex seething activity of men, with their commerce, wars, roads of communication, science, arts, is for the greater part only a crush of a senseless crowd at the gate of life.

VI.

THE DOUBLING OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE MEN OF OUR WORLD

"BUT verily, verily, I say unto you, The time is coming and is already at hand when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and hearing shall come to life." And this time is coming. No matter how much a man may assure himself, and no matter how much others may assure him, that life can be good and rational only beyond the grave, or that nothing but the personal life can be good and rational, — man cannot believe this. Man has in the depth of his soul an ineffaceable demand that his life should be a good and should have a rational meaning, and life, which has before itself no other aim than the life after the grave or the impossible good of the personality, is an evil and an absurdity.

"To live for the future life?" man says to himself. "But if that life, that only sample of life which I know, my present life, is to be meaningless, this not only fails to confirm me in the belief that another, rational life is possible, but, on the contrary, convinces me that life is in its essence meaningless, and that there can be no other life but the meaningless.

"To live for myself? But my personal life is an evil and an absurdity. To live for my family? For the common weal, for my country, for humanity even? But if the life of my personality is wretched and meaningless, the life of every other human personality is also meaningless, and so an endless number of collected absurd and irrational personalities will not form one single blessed and rational life. To live for myself, not knowing why, and doing what others are doing ? But I know that others, like myself, do not know themselves why they do what they do."

The time comes when the rational consciousness outgrows the false teachings, and man stops amidst life and demands an explanation.[1]

Only such rare person as has no relations with men of other manners of life, or a man who is constantly occupied in a tense battle with Nature for the purpose of supporting his bodily existence, can believe in this, that the execution of those senseless deeds, which he calls his duty, can be a duty of life peculiar to him.

The time is at hand and already here, when the deception which proclaims as life the verbal negation of this life for the purpose of preparing for oneself a future life and the acknowledgment of the personal animal existence, and which calls the so-called duty the work of life, — when this deception shall become clear for the majority of men, and it is only people who are crushed by want or dulled by a life of lust that can exist, without feeling the senselessness and wretchedness of their existence.

Men awake ever more frequently to the rational consciousness, come to life in their graves, and the fundamental contradiction of the human life, in spite of all the efforts of men to conceal this from themselves, stands out before the majority of men with terrible force and clearness.

"My whole life is a desire for good for myself," says the awakened man, "but my reason tells me that this good cannot exist for me, and that, no matter what I may do and what I may attain, everything will end in one and the same, in sufferings and death, — in destruction. I want the good, I want life, I want a rational meaning, but in me and in everything which surrounds me there is evil, death, absurdity. What shall I do? How can I live?" And there is no answer.

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[1] See third appendix.

A man looks about him and seeks an answer for his question, and does not find it. He will find about him teachings that will answer questions which he has not put to himself, but in the world that surrounds him there is no answer to the question which he has put to himself. There is but the bustle of men, who, without knowing why, are performing acts which others are performing, themselves not knowing why.

All live as though they were not conscious of the wretchedness of their situation and the absurdity of their activity. "Either *they* are senseless, or *I* am," the awakened man says to himself. "But all men cannot be senseless, consequently it is I who am senseless. But no, — that rational ego which tells me this cannot be senseless. Let it be one against the whole world, I cannot help but believe it."

And man recognizes himself alone in the whole world with those terrible questions which tear his soul asunder. And one has to live.

One ego, his personality, commands him to live.

The other ego, his reason, says: "You cannot live."

Man feels that he has doubled. And this doubling lacerates his heart in an agonizing manner.

And it seems to him that his reason is the cause of this doubling and suffering.

Reason, that highest quality of man, which is necessary for his life, which, amidst the forces of Nature that destroy him, gives him, the naked and helpless man, the means both for existence and for enjoyment, — that same quality poisons his life.

In all the surrounding world, amidst living creatures, the qualities that are peculiar to these beings are necessary for them, are common to them all, and coöperate with their good. Plants, insects, animals, submitting to their law, live a blessed, joyful, calm life. And suddenly this highest quality of man's nature produces in him such a painful state that frequently — more and more frequently of late — man cuts the Gordian knot of his life, and kills himself, only to free himself from the painful internal contradiction which is produced by a rational consciousness, and which in our time has been carried to the highest degree of tension.

VII.

THE DOUBLING OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS IS DUE TO CONFUSING THE ANIMAL LIFE WITH THE HUMAN LIFE

It seems to man that the rational consciousness awakened in him breaks and arrests his life only because he recognizes that to be his life which has not been, and cannot be, his life.

Having been educated and brought up in the false teachings of our world, which confirm him in his conviction that his life is nothing but his personal existence, which began with his birth, it seems to man that he lived when he was a babe, a child; then it seems to him that he lived without a break, as a youth and a full-grown man. He lived, as it seems to him, a very long time ago, and has lived all the time without a break, and suddenly reached the time when it became indubitably clear to him that it was impossible to live as he had lived before, and that his life has been arrested and is breaking up.

The false teaching has confirmed him in the idea that his life is the period of time from his birth to his death, and, looking at the visible life of the animals, he confused the idea of the visible life with his consciousness, and came to the absolute conviction that this visible life is his life.

The awakened rational consciousness, in making demands on him which cannot be satisfied for the animal life, shows him the faultiness of his concept of life; but the false teaching which has penetrated him keeps him from recognizing his mistake: he cannot renounce his concept of life as an animal existence, and it seems to him that his life has come to a stop through the awakening of his rational consciousness. But that which he calls his life, which to him seems to be arrested, has never existed. What he calls his life, his existence from birth, never was his life; his idea that he has lived all the time from his birth to the present moment is a deception of consciousness, similar to the deception of consciousness in a dream: up to the waking there were no dreams, — they arose all at the moment of waking. Up to the waking of the rational consciousness there was no life: the concept of the past life formed itself at the waking of the rational consciousness.

Man lived like an animal during his childhood, and knew nothing of life. If a man lived ten months, he would not know anything of his own, nor of any other life: he would know as little as if he died in his mother's womb. And not only a babe, but also a demented grown man and a complete idiot cannot know that they live and that other beings live. And so they have no human life.

Human life begins only with the manifestation of rational consciousness, which at the same time reveals to a man his life, in the present and in the past, and the lives of other entities, and everything which inevitably results from the relations of these entities, — sufferings and death, — precisely what produces in him the negation of the good of the personal life and the contradiction which, as he thinks, arrests his life.

Man wants to define his life in time, as he defines all visible existence outside of him, and suddenly there awakens in him life, which does not coincide with the time of his carnal birth, and he does not want to believe that that which is not defined in time can be life. But no matter how much man may seek in time that point from which he may count the beginning of his rational life, he will never find it.[1]

In his recollections he will never find this point, this beginning of his rational consciousness. It seems to him that the rational consciousness has always existed in him. If he does find something resembling a beginning of consciousness, he does not find it in his carnal birth, but in a sphere which has nothing in common with his carnal birth. He cognizes his rational consciousness quite differently from what his carnal birth appears to him to be. Asking himself about the origin of his rational consciousness, man never imagines that, as a rational being, he is the son of his father and mother, the grandson of his grandparents, who were born in such and such a year; he is conscious, not exactly of being a son, but of being united in one with the consciousness of rational beings most foreign to him in time and space, who may have lived thousands of years before and at the other end of the world. In his rational consciousness man does not even see any origin of himself, but is conscious of his extra-temporal and extra-spatial union with other rational beings, so that they enter into him and he into them. This rational consciousness, which is awakened in man, arrests, as it were, that semblance of life which erring men regard as life: to the erring men it seems that their life is arrested at the very moment when it awakens.

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[1] Nothing is more common than to hear discussions about the inception and evolution of human life and of life in general in time. People who discuss in this manner imagine that they are standing on the firmest ground of reality, and yet there is nothing more fantastic than the discussions about the evolution of life in time. These discussions are like what a man would do, who, wishing to measure a line, would not lay off the measure from the one known point on which he is standing, but would select imaginary points at various indefinite distances from himself, and would begin to measure from them toward himself. Do not people do the same, when they discuss the inception and evolution of life in man? Indeed, where on that endless line, which represents the evolution of human life in the past, are we to take that arbitrary point from which we may begin the fantastic history of the evolution of this life? Is it in the birth or inception of the child, or of his parents, or still farther back, in the primeval animal and protoplasm, in the first bit broken loose from the sun? All these discussions will be most arbitrary fancies, — mensuration without a measure. — *Author's Note.*

VIII.

THERE IS NO DOUBLING AND NO CONTRADICTION: THEY APPEAR ONLY WITH THE FALSE TEACHING

It is only the false teaching about the human life being the animal existence from birth to death, in which men are brought up and maintained, that produces the agonizing condition of doubling, into which men enter at the manifestation of their rational consciousness in them.

To a man who is under this delusion it appears that life is doubled in him.

Man knows that his life is one, and yet he feels it as two. Rolling a small ball with the two fingers crossed over one another, one feels it to be two. Something similar takes place with a man who has acquired a wrong concept of life.

Man's reason is falsely directed: he has been taught to recognize as life nothing but his carnal personal existence, which cannot be life.

With such a false concept of an imaginary life he has looked upon life, and has come to see two lives: the one, as he has imagined it to be, and the other which really is.

To such a man it seems that the negation by the rational consciousness of the good of the personal existence and the demand of another good is something morbid and unnatural.

But to a man, as a rational being, the negation of the possibility of the personal good and of life is the inevitable consequence of the conditions of the personal life and of the quality of the rational consciousness, which is connected with it. The negation of the good and of the life of personality is for the rational being just as natural a quality of his life as it is natural for a bird to fly with its wings, and not to run with its feet. But if a feathered fledgeling runs with its feet, it does not prove that flying is not peculiar to it. If we see outside of ourselves men with a dormant consciousness, who assume that their life lies in the good of personality, this does not prove that it is improper for a man to live a rational life. The awakening of man to his true life, peculiar to him, takes place in our world with such painful tension, only because the false teaching of the world tries to convince men that the phantom of life is life itself, and that the manifestation of the true life is a violation of it.

What happens with men in our world who enter into the true life is very much like what would happen with a girl, from whom the properties of a woman should be concealed. Feeling the symptoms of sexual maturity, such a girl would consider the condition which calls her to the future family life, with the obligations and joys of a mother, a morbid and unnatural condition, which would bring her to despair.

Similar despair is experienced by the men of our world at the first signs of the awakening to the true human life.

A man in whom the rational consciousness is awakened, but who at the same time understands his life only as being personal, is in the same agonizing condition in which an animal would be, which, recognizing the motion of matter as its life, would not recognize the law of personality, but would only see its life in the subjection of self to the laws of matter, which take place without its effort. Such an animal would experience an agonizing internal contradiction and doubling. In submitting only to the laws of matter, it would see its life in nothing but lying and breathing, but its personality would demand something different of it, — nutrition of self, continuation of species, — and then the animal would imagine that it experienced a doubling and contradiction. "Life," it would think, "lies in submitting to the laws of gravity, that is, in not moving, and lying still, and in submitting to the chemical processes which take place in the body; I am doing all this, and yet I have, in addition, to move, and feed, and seek a male or female."

The animal would be suffering, and would see an agonizing contradiction and doubling in this condition. The same takes place with a man who is taught to regard the baser law of his life, the animal personality, as the law of his life. The higher law of life, the law of his rational consciousness, demands something different of him; but all the surrounding life and the false teachings keep him in a deceptive consciousness, and he feels a contradiction and doubling.

But, as the animal, to stop suffering, must recognize as its law not the baser law of matter, but the law of its personality, and, fulfilling it, makes use of the laws of matter for the gratification of the purposes of its personality, — even so a man has to recognize his life not in the baser law of personality, but in the higher law, which includes the first law, — in the law revealed to him in his rational consciousness, — and the contradiction will be destroyed, and the personality will be freely submitted to the rational consciousness and will serve it.

IX.

THE BIRTH OF THE TRUE LIFE IN MAN

As we analyze in time and observe the manifestation of life in the human being, we see that the true life is always preserved in man, as it is in the seed, and the time comes when this life is made manifest. The manifestation of the true life consists in this, that the animal personality draws him toward its own good, while the rational consciousness shows him the impossibility of the personal good and points out a certain other good. Man strains his vision toward this good, which is pointed out to him in the distance, and he is not able to see it; at first he does not believe in this good and returns to the personal good; but the rational consciousness, which points so indefinitely at its good, shows so indubitably and so convincingly the impossibility of the personal good that man again renounces his personal good and again scans this new good, which is pointed out to him. The rational good is not visible, but the personal good is so thoroughly destroyed that it is impossible to continue the personal existence; and in man there is being established a new relation of his animal to his rational consciousness. He is being born to the new human life.

What takes place is similar to what happens in the material world at every birth. The fruit is not born because it wants to be born, because it is better for it to be born, and because it knows that it is good to be born, but because it is mature, and it cannot continue its former existence; it is compelled to surrender to the new life, not so much because the new life calls it, as because the possibility of the former existence is destroyed.

The rational consciousness, growing imperceptibly up in his personality, reaches a point when the life in the personality becomes impossible.

What takes place is precisely what happens at the inception of everything: the same destruction of the seed, of the previous form of life, and the appearance of a new growth; the same seeming struggle of the older form of the decomposing seed and the increase of the new growth, and the same nutrition of the new growth at the expense of the decomposing seed. The difference between the birth of the rational consciousness and the visible carnal inception consists for us in this, that while in the carnal birth we see in time and in space out of what, and how, and when a being is born of the germ, know that the seed is the fruit, that from the seed under certain conditions the plant will come, that it will have a flower and then a fruit, like the seed (the circle of life takes place under our very eyes), — we do not see the growth of the rational consciousness in time, we do not see the completion of its circle. We do not see this growth of the rational consciousness and the completion of its circle, because we ourselves complete it: our life is nothing but the birth of that invisible essence which is born in us, and so we can never see it.

We cannot see the birth of this new essence, the new relation of the rational consciousness to the animal, just as the seed cannot see the growth of its stalk. When the rational consciousness comes out of its concealed position and is made manifest for us, it seems to us that we are experiencing a contradiction. But there is no contradiction, just as there is none in the sprouting seed. In the sprouting seed, we see only that life, which before was in the integument of the seed, is now in its sprout. Even so there is no contradiction in man with his awakened rational consciousness, but only the birth of a new being, of a new relation of the rational consciousness to the animal.

If a man exists, without knowing that other entities exist and that enjoyments will not satisfy him, — that he will die, — he does not even know that he lives, and there is no contradiction in him.

But if a man has come to see that other entities are just such as he himself is, that sufferings await him, that his existence is a slow death; if his rational consciousness has begun to decompose the existence of his personality, he no longer can put his life in this decomposing personality, but inevitably must place it in that new life which is revealed to him. And so there is again no contradiction, as there is no contradiction in the seed which has sent forth a sprout and, therefore, is decomposing.

X.

REASON IS THAT LAW COGNIZED BY MAN, BY WHICH HIS LIFE IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

MAN'S true life, which is manifested in the relation of his rational consciousness to his animal personality, begins only when there begins the negation of his animal personality; but the negation of the good of the animal personality begins when the rational consciousness is awakened.

But what is the rational consciousness? The Gospel of John begins with this, that the word λόγος (reason, wisdom, word) is the beginning, and that in it is everything, and everything from it; and that, therefore, reason, that which defines everything else, cannot be defined by anything.

Reason cannot be defined, and there is no reason for defining it, because we all not merely know it, but know nothing else. In communing with one another, we are convinced in advance — more than in anything else — of the equal obligatoriness of this reason which is common to us all. Reason we know more correctly and earlier than anything else, so that everything which we know in the world we know only because what is cognized by us agrees with the laws of this reason, which is incontestably known to us. We know reason, and cannot help knowing it. We cannot help it, because reason is that law according to which the rational beings — men — must inevitably live. Reason is for man that law according to which his life is accomplished, just such a law as the one for which the animal, according to which it feeds and multiplies, — as that law for the plant, according to which it grows, and the grass, the tree blooms, as the law for the heavenly body, according to which the earth and the luminaries move.

The law which we know in ourselves as the law of our life is the same law according to which all the external phenomena of the world are accomplished, but with this difference, that in us we know this law as that which we ourselves must accomplish, while in the external phenomena we know it as that which takes place according to this law without our participation. Everything which we know of the world is only the visible submission to reason, which is taking place outside us, in the heavenly bodies, in the animals, the plants, the whole world. In the external world we see this submission to the law of reason; but in ourselves we know this law as that which we must ourselves accomplish.

The habitual delusion about life consists in this, that the subjection of our animal body to its law, which is not accomplished by us, but is only seen by us, is taken for the human life, while this law of our animal body, with which our rational consciousness is connected, is in our animal body accomplished as unconsciously as it is accomplished in the tree, the crystal, the heavenly body. But the law of our life — the subjection of our animal body to reason — is that law which we see nowhere, and cannot see, because it has not yet been accomplished, and is being accomplished by us in our life. In the accomplishment of this law, in the subjection of the animal personality to the law of reason, for the purpose of obtaining the good, does our life consist. By failing to understand this, that our good and our life consist in the subjection of our animal personality to the law of reason, by accepting the good and the existence of our animal personality as our whole life and renouncing the task of life, which is set for us, we deprive ourselves of our true good and of our true life, and in its place put that visible existence of our animal activity, which is accomplished independently of us, and so cannot be our life.

XI.

THE FALSE DIRECTION OF KNOWLEDGE

The delusion that the visible law, which operates on our animal personality, is the law of our life is an old delusion, into which men have fallen at all times. This delusion, by concealing from men the chief object of their cognition, the subjection of the animal personality to reason for the purpose of obtaining the good of life, puts in its place the study of the existence of men, which is independent of the good of life.

Instead of studying the law, to which, for the purpose of obtaining its good, man's animal personality must be subjected, and instead of studying all the other phenomena of the world on the basis of the cognition of this law, the false knowledge directs its efforts only to the study of the good and of the existence of man's animal personality, without the least reference to the chief subject of knowledge, — the subjection of this animal personality of man to the law of reason, for the purpose of obtaining the good of the true life.

The false cognition, by not having in view this chief object of knowledge, directs its forces to the study of the animal existence of men past and present and to the study of the conditions of man's existence in general, as an animal. It appears to him that from these studies may be found the guidance for the good of the human life.

The false knowledge judges as follows: Men have existed heretofore, — so let us see how they existed, through what changes they passed in their existence both in time and space, and whither these changes tend. From these historical changes of their existence we shall find the law of their life.

By not having in view the chief aim of knowledge, — the study of that rational law to which man's personality ought to be subjected for the sake of his good, — the so-called learned men of this category, by the very aim which they set for their investigation, pass sentence on the vanity of all study. Indeed, if the existence of men changes only in consequence of the general laws of their animal existence, the study of those laws to which it is subject anyway is quite useless and void. Whether men know about the law of the change of their existence, or not, this law is accomplished just as the change in the life of moles and beavers is accomplished in consequence of those conditions under which they live. But if the knowledge of that rational law to which man's life must be subjected is possible for him, it is evident that he can not find the knowledge of this law of reason anywhere except where it has been revealed to him, — in his rational consciousness. And so, no matter how much men may study how men have existed as animals, they will never find out anything about the existence of men, which does not take place in them even without this knowledge; and never, no matter how much they may study man's animal existence, will they find out that law to which, for the good of his life, this animal existence of man must be subjected.

This is one category of barren human reflections on life, which are called historical and political sciences.

Another category of reflections, which are especially common in our time, and with which the only object of knowledge is entirely lost sight of, is this: In viewing man as an object of observation, we see, say the learned, that he feeds, grows, multiplies, ages, and dies, like any other animal; but certain psychic phenomena (so they call them) interfere with the exactness of the observations and offer too great a complexity, and so, in order that we may better understand man, we shall view his life first in simpler manifestations, such as resemble those which we see in the animals and plants, which are deprived of this psychic activity. But, when we view the animals and plants, we see that in all of them there are manifested still simpler laws of matter, which are common to them all. And since the laws of the animals are simpler than the laws of man, and the laws of plants are still simpler, and the laws of matter still simpler, we must base the investigations on the very simplest, — on the laws of matter. We see that what takes place in the plants and animals takes place in the same way in man, they say, and so we conclude that everything which takes place in man will be explained to us from what takes place in the simplest visible inanimate matter which is subject to our experiments, — the more so since all the peculiarities of man's activity are in a constant dependence on the forces which are active in matter. Every modification in the matter which forms man's body changes and impairs his activity. And so, they conclude, the laws of matter are the causes of man's activity. They are not troubled by the reflection that in man there is something which we do not see in the animals, nor in the plants, nor in the dead matter, and that this something is the only object of knowledge, without which every other is useless.

It does not occur to them that, if the modification of matter in man's body impairs his activity, this proves only that the modification of matter is one of the causes which impair man's activity, and not that the motion of matter is the cause of man's activity. Just so the damage done to a plant by the removal of the earth beneath its roots proves only that the earth may be everywhere, or not, but not that the plant is the product of earth. And so they study in man what takes place in the dead matter, and in the plant, and in the animal, assuming that the elucidation of the laws of the phenomena which correspond to man's life make clear to them man's very life.

In order that we may understand man's life, that is, that law to which, for the sake of man's good, his animal personality is to be subjected, men view either man's historical existence, and not his life, or the uncognizable and merely visible subjection of the animal, the plant, and the dead matter to various laws, that is, they do the same which men do who study the condition of unknown objects, in order that they might find that unknown aim which they ought to follow.

It is quite true that the knowledge of the visible manifestation of men's existence in history may be instructive for us, and that the study of the laws of the animal personality of man and of other animals, and the study of the laws to which matter itself is subject, may be just as instructive to us. The study of all that is important for man, showing him, as in a reflection, what necessarily takes place in his life; but it is evident that the knowledge of what has already taken place and is visible to us, no matter how full it may be, cannot give us the chief knowledge which we need, — the knowledge of the law to which our animal personality must be subjected for the sake of our good. The knowledge of the laws which are operating is instructive for us, but only when we recognize that law of reason to which our animal personality must be subordinated, and not when this law is not at all recognized.

No matter how well a tree may study (if it could study) all the chemical and physical phenomena which takes place in it, it could not from these observations and this knowledge in any way arrive at the necessity of collecting sap and distributing it for the growth of its trunk to the leaf, the flower, and the fruit.

Even so is man: no matter how well he may know the law governing his animal personality, and the laws governing matter, these laws do not give him the least indications as to how he is to act with that piece of bread which he has in his hands, — whether to give it to his wife, a stranger, his dog, or eat it himself; whether to defend this piece, or give it to him who asks him for it. But the life of man consists only in the solution of these and similar questions.

The study of the laws governing the existence of animals, plants, and matter is not only useful, but even necessary for the elucidation of the law of man's life, but only when this study has for its aim the chief object of human knowledge, — the elucidation of the law of reason.

But with the supposition that man's life is only his animal existence, and that the good, as pointed out by the rational consciousness, is impossible, and that the law of reason is only a phantom, such a study becomes not only void, but also pernicious, in that it conceals from man his only object of cognition and supports him in that error that by studying the reflection of an object he may know the object itself. Such a study is like what a man would do if he carefully studied all the changes and movements of the shadow of a living being, thinking that the cause of the motion of the living being is to be sought in the changes and movements of his shadow.

XII.

THE CAUSE OF THE FALSE KNOWLEDGE IS THE FALSE PERSPECTIVE IN WHICH OBJECTS PRESENT THEMSELVES

"TRUE knowledge consists in knowing that we know what we know, and do not know what we do not know," said Confucius; "but false knowledge consists in thinking that we know what we do not know, and do not know what we know." It is impossible to give a more exact definition of that false knowledge which reigns among us. The false knowledge of our time assumes that we know what we cannot know, and that we cannot know what alone we know. To a man with false knowledge it appears that he knows everything which appears to him in space and time, and that he does not know what is known to him in his rational consciousness.

To such a man it appears that the good in general and his good in particular are for him a subject of which he can know least. Just as unknowable appears to him his reason, his rational consciousness; he himself, as an animal, appears to himself as a little more knowable object; still more knowable objects are for him the animals and plants, and most knowable appears to him the dead, infinitely distributed matter.

Something similar takes place with man's vision. A man always unconsciously directs his vision preferably to most distant objects, which, consequently, appear to him most simple in colour and contour, — to the sky, the horizon, the distant fields, the woods. These objects present themselves the more clearly defined and simple, the farther they are removed, and, on the other hand, the nearer an object is, the more complicated are its outlines and colour.

If a man were not able to define the distance of objects, if he did not in looking arrange the objects in perspective, but recognized the greater simplicity and definiteness of the outlines and the colour of the objects as a greater degree of visibility, the simplest and most visible would to him appear the endless heaven, then less visible the more complex outlines of the horizon, then still less visible the houses and trees, which are more complex in colour and outline, and still less visible the hand which is moving in front of his eyes, and least visible of all, the light.

Is not the same true of the false knowledge of man? What is indubitably known to him, his rational consciousness, seems to him unknowable, because it is not simple, while what is incomprehensible for him, the infinite and eternal matter, seems to him most knowable, because on account of its distance from him it appears to him simple.

But the reverse is true. First of all and with the greatest certainty every man may know and does know that good toward which he is striving; then he knows with the same certainty that reason which shows him this good; then only he knows his animal personality, which is subjected to this reason, and then only he sees, but does not know, all the other phenomena, which present themselves to him in space and time.

It is only to a man with the false concept of life that it appears that he knows the objects better the more they are determined in space and time; but in reality we know fully only that which is not determined in space, or time, — the good and the law of reason; but the external objects we know less, in proportion as our consciousness takes less part in the cognition, in consequence of which an object is defined only by its place in space and time.

And so, the more exclusively an object is defined by space and time, the less it is knowable for man.

Man's true knowledge ends with the cognition of his personality, of his animal. This animal of his, which strives after the good and is subject to the law of reason, man knows quite distinctly from the knowledge of everything which is not his personality. He really knows himself in this animal, and knows himself not because he is something spatial and temporal (on the contrary,—he can never know himself as a temporal and spatial manifestation), but because he is something which for the sake of its good must be subjected to the law of reason. He knows himself in this animal as something independent of time and space. When he asks himself about his place in time and space, it appears to him first of all that he is standing in the midst of time which is infinite on either side, and that he is the centre of a globe, whose periphery is everywhere and nowhere. And it is this extra-temporal and extra-spatial self that man knows in reality, and with this ego of his ends his real knowledge. Everything which is outside this ego man does not know, and can only observe and define in an external, conditional manner.

By renouncing for a time the knowledge of himself as a rational centre which is striving after the good, that is, as an extra-temporal and extra-spatial being, man may for a time admit conditionally that he is a part of the visible universe, which manifests itself in space and time. By viewing himself thus, in space and time, in connection with other beings, man unites his true inner knowledge of himself with an external observation of himself, and receives the notion of himself as of a man in general, resembling all other men; from this conditional knowledge of himself man gets a certain external notion of other men as well, but he does not know them.

The impossibility for man of getting a true knowledge of men is due even to this, that he sees not merely one such man, but hundreds and thousands of them, and knows that there are, have been, and will be such men, whom he has never seen and never will see.

Beyond men, at a still greater distance from himself, man sees in space and time animals which differ from men and from one another. These beings would be entirely incomprehensible to him, if he did not have any knowledge of man in general; but, since he has this knowledge and abstracts from the concept of man his rational consciousness, he gets a certain notion also about the animals; but this notion still less resembles knowledge for him than his notion of men in general. Of animals he sees the greatest variety and in enormous numbers, and the greater their numbers, the less possible can his knowledge of them obviously be.

Still farther away from himself, he sees the plants, and the distribution of these phenomena is still greater in the world, and so the knowledge of them is still more impossible.

Still farther away from himself, beyond the animals and plants, in space and time, man sees the dead bodies and the feebly, or not at all, differentiated forms of matter. Matter he understands least of all. The knowledge of the forms of matter is for him quite indifferent, and he not only fails to know it, but merely imagines it, — the more so since matter presents itself to him as infinite in space and time.

XIII.

THE KNOWABLENESS OF OBJECTS DOES NOT INCREASE IN CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR MANIFESTATION IN SPACE AND TIME, BUT IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE UNITY OF THE LAW TO WHICH WE AND ALL THE OBJECTS WHICH WE STUDY ARE SUBJECT

WHAT can be more intelligible than the words: the dog has a pain; the calf is gentle, — it loves me; the bird is glad, the horse is afraid, a good man, a bad animal? Now all these most important and intelligible words are not defined in space and time; on the contrary: the less intelligible the law is to which the phenomenon is subject, the more exactly is the phenomenon defined in time and space. Who can say that he understands that law of gravitation according to which the motion of the earth and the sun takes place? And yet the eclipse of the sun is most exactly defined in space and time.

We know completely only our life, our striving after the good, and reason, which points this good out to us. Next in certainty is the knowledge of our animal personality, which strives toward the good and is subject to the law of reason. In the knowledge of our animal personality there appear already spatial and temporal conditions, visible, sensible, observable, but inaccessible to our understanding. Next in certainty is the knowledge of just such animal personalities as we are, in whom we recognize a common striving toward the good and a common rational consciousness. We know them to the extent to which the life of these personalities approximates the laws of our life, of the striving after the good, and of the subjection to the law of reason; we do not know them to the extent to which their life is manifested in spatial and temporal conditions. Thus we know men most. Next in certitude is our knowledge of animals, in which we see a personality striving, like our own, after the good; but we here barely recognize a semblance of our rational consciousness, and with them we can no longer commune by means of this our rational consciousness. Next after the animals we see the plants, in which we with difficulty recognize a personality, like our own, striving after the good. These beings present themselves to us mainly as temporal and spatial phenomena, and so are still less accessible to our knowledge.

We know them, only because in them we see a personality, resembling our animal personality, which, like our own, strives after the good and subjects matter to the law of reason manifested in it, in the conditions of space and time.

Still less accessible to our knowledge are impersonal, material objects; in these we no longer find a similitude of our personality, no longer see a striving after the good, but only temporal and spatial manifestations of the laws of reason, to which they are subject.

The correctness of our knowledge does not depend on the observableness of objects in space and time; on the contrary, the more observable a manifestation of an object is in space and time, the less comprehensible it is for us.

Our knowledge of the world results from the consciousness of our striving after the good, and from the necessity, for the sake of obtaining this good, of subjecting our animal to reason. If we know the life of an animal, we know it only because we see in the animal also a striving after the good and a necessity of submitting to the law of reason, which in the animal presents itself as the law of the organism.

If we know matter, we know it only because, though its good is not comprehensible to us, we none the less see in it the same phenomenon as in ourselves, — the necessity of submitting to the law of reason which governs it.

The knowledge of anything is for us the transference to other objects of our knowledge of the fact that life is a striving after the good, which is obtained by submitting to the law of reason.

Everything which a man knows of the external world he knows only because he knows himself and in himself finds three different relations to the world: one — the relation of his rational consciousness, the second — the relation of his animal, and the third — the relation of matter which enters the body of his animal. He knows in himself these three different relations, and so everything which he sees in the world is always distributed before him in the perspective of three distinct plans: (1) rational beings; (2) animals and plants, and (3) inanimate matter.

Man always sees these three categories of objects in the world, because he embraces in himself these three objects of cognition. He knows himself: (1) as rational consciousness, subordinating the animal; (2) as an animal, subject to rational consciousness, and (3) as matter, subject to the animal.

It is not from the cognition of the laws of matter, as is generally believed, that we can know the laws of the organisms, and not from the cognition of the laws of the organisms that we can know ourselves as rational beings, but vice versa. First of all, we can and must know ourselves, that is, that law of reason to which, for the sake of our good, our personality has to be subordinated, and then only can we and must we know the law of our animal personality and of entities similar to it, and, at a still more remote distance from ourselves, the laws of matter.

We must know and do know only ourselves. The world of animals is for us only a reflection of what we know in ourselves. The material world is, as it were, a reflection of a reflection.

The laws of matter seem especially clear to us, only because they are uniform for us; and they are uniform for us, only because they are particularly remote from the cognizable law of our life.

The laws of the organisms seem to us simpler than the law of our life, again on account of their remoteness from us. But in them we merely observe the laws: we do not know them, as we know the law of our rational consciousness, which has to be fulfilled by us.

We know neither the one existence, nor the other: we only see and observe it outside ourselves. What we know beyond any doubt is the law of our rational consciousness, because it is needed for our good, because we live by this consciousness; and we do not see it, because we are not in possession of that higher point from which we may observe it.

But, if there existed higher beings which would subordinate our rational consciousness in the same way in which we subordinate our animal personality, and in which the animal personality (the organism) subordinates matter, these higher beings could see our rational life, just as we see our animal existence and the existence of matter.

Man's life presents itself as insolubly connected with two forms of existence, which it embraces: the existence of animals and plants (organisms) and the existence of matter.

Man produces his own true life, — he lives through it; but in those two forms of existence which are connected with his life man cannot be a participant. The body and matter, which form him, exist in themselves.

These forms of existence present themselves to man as lives passed through at some former time and embraced by his life, — as recollections of former lives.

In man's true life these two forms of existence represent to him the instrument and material of his labour, but not the labour itself.

It is useful for man to study both the material and instrument of his labour. The better he knows them, the better he will be able to work. The study of these forms of existence which are included in his life — of his animal and of the matter forming the animal — shows to man, as though in a reflection, the general law of everything in existence, — the submission to the law of reason, and so confirms him in the necessity of the submission of his animal to this law; but man cannot and must not mistake the material and the instrument of his labour for the labour itself.

No matter how much man may study life which is visible, sensible, observable in himself and in others, — life which is accomplished without his efforts, this life always remains a mystery to him; from these observations he will never comprehend this unknowable life, and by means of observations on this mysterious life, which is always concealed from him in the infinitude of space and time, he will never illuminate his true life, which is revealed to him in his consciousness, and which consists in the subjection of his unique and most familiar animal personality to the unique and most familiar law of reason, for the purpose of obtaining his unique and most familiar good for himself.

XIV.

MAN'S TRUE LIFE IS NOT WHAT TAKES PLACE IN SPACE AND TIME

Man knows his life in him as a striving after the good, which is obtainable by the submission of his animal personality to the law of reason.

Another human life he does not know and cannot know. Indeed, man only then acknowledges an animal to be alive, when its composing matter is subject not only to its own laws, but also to the higher law of the organism.

If in a certain combination of matter there is a subjection to the higher law of the organism, we recognize life in this combination of matter; if this subjection does not exist, — if it has not yet begun, or has come to an end, — and if that no longer exists which separates this matter from all the other matter, in which nothing but mechanical, chemical, physical laws act, we do not recognize in it any animal life.

Even so we only then recognize ourselves and similar beings as living, when our animal personality, in addition to the subjection of the organism to its law, is also subjected to the higher law of rational consciousness.

As long as this subjection of the personality to the law of reason does not exist, as long as in man acts only the law of personality, subduing the matter which composes it, we do not know and do not see the human life either in others or in ourselves, as we do not see the animal life in the matter which submits only to its own laws.

No matter how strong or quick the movements of man may be in delirium, in insanity, or in agony, in intoxication, and even in an outburst of passion, we do not recognize man as living, do not treat him as a living man, and recognize in him only the possibility of life. But no matter how feeble or immovable a man may be, — if we see that his animal personality is subject to reason, we recognize him as living and treat him accordingly.

Human life we cannot understand otherwise than as subjection of the animal personality to the law of reason.

This life is manifested in time and space, but is not determined by temporal or spatial conditions, but only by the degree of the subjection of the animal personality to reason. To determine life by temporal and spatial conditions is the same as defining the height of an object by its length and breadth.

The upward motion of an object, which at the same time moves on a plane, will be an exact similitude of the relation of man's true life to the life of the animal personality, or of the true life to the temporal and spatial life. The upward motion of the object does not depend on the motion on the plane, and cannot be increased or diminished by it. The same is true of the determination of man's life. The true life is always made manifest in the personality, but does not depend on this or that existence of the personality, and cannot be increased or diminished by it.

The temporal and spatial conditions, in which man's animal personality happens to be, cannot influence the true life, which consists in the subjection of the animal personality to the rational consciousness.

It is beyond the power of man, who wants to live, to destroy or arrest the spatial and temporal motion of his existence; but his true life is the attainment of the good by means of subjection to reason, independently of these visible spatial and temporal motions. In this greater and ever greater attainment of the good by means of the subjection to reason lies that which forms the human life. If this increase in the subjection be wanting, the human life goes in the two visible directions of space and of time, and is nothing but existence. If this upward motion exists, — this greater and ever greater submission to reason, a relation is established between the two forces and the one, and a greater or lesser motion along the resultant takes place and raises existence into the sphere of life.

The spatial and temporal forces are definite, final forces, which are incompatible with the concept of life; but the force of striving after the good through submission to reason is a force which raises upward, — it is the force of life itself, for which there are no temporal, no spatial limitations.

Man imagines that his life is arrested or doubled, but these arrests and perturbations are only an illusion of consciousness (like the illusion of the external sensations). There are no arrests and perturbations of the true life, and there can be none: they only seem so to us with our false view of life.

A man begins to live a true life, that is, rises to a certain height above the animal life, and from this height sees the phantasmal condition of his animal existence, which inevitably ends in death, and that his existence on the plane is on all sides limited by abysses, and, as he does not acknowledge that this upward tendency is life, he is terrified at what is revealed to him from his height, and purposely descends and lies down as low as possible, in order that he may not see the precipices that are open to him. But the force of his rational consciousness lifts him up again, and again he sees, again he is terrified, and again he descends to earth, in order that he may not see. This lasts until he finally recognizes that, in order to save himself from the terror before the precipitous motion of perishable life, he must understand that his motion in the plane — his spatial and temporal existence — is not his life, that his life is only in the upward motion, and that only in the subjection of his personality to the law of reason does the possibility of the good and of life consist. He must understand that he has wings which raise him above the precipice, that, if he did not possess these wings, he would never have risen to the height and have seen the precipice. He must have faith in his wings and fly whither they carry him.

Only from this want of assurance arise those perturbations of the true life, its arrests and the doubling of consciousness, which at first appear so strange.

Only to a man who understands his life in the animal existence as defined by space and by time does it appear that the rational consciousness has been manifested at times in the animal existence. Looking thus upon the manifestation in himself of the rational consciousness, man asks himself when and under what conditions his rational consciousness appeared in him. But no matter how much a man may investigate his past, he will never discover these times of the manifestation of his rational consciousness: it always seems to him that either it has never existed, or has existed at all times. If it appears to him that there have been intervals of his rational consciousness, this is due to the fact that he does not recognize the life of the rational consciousness as life. By understanding his life only as animal existence, as defined by spatial and temporal conditions, man wants to measure the awakening and the activity of the rational consciousness with the same measure: he asks himself, "When, how long, under what conditions have I been in possession of the rational consciousness?" but the intervals between the awakenings of the rational life exist only for a man who understands his life as the life of the animal personality. For a man who understands his life to be in what it is, — in the activity of the rational consciousness, — these intervals do not exist.

The rational life exists. It alone exists. Intervals of time, whether of one minute or of fifty thousand years, are immaterial for it, because time does not exist for it. Man's true life — from which he forms for himself a concept of any other life — is a striving after the good, obtainable by the subjection of his personality to the law of reason. Neither reason, nor the degree of subjection to reason, are defined by space or by time. Man's true life takes place outside space and time.

XV.

THE RENUNCIATION OF THE GOOD OF ANIMAL PERSONALITY IS THE LAW OF HUMAN LIFE

LIFE is the striving after the good. The striving after the good is life. Thus all men have always understood life, and thus they will always understand it. Consequently man's life is a striving after the human good, and the striving after the human good is human life. The crowd, the unthinking people, understand man's good to lie in the good of his animal personality.

The false science, by excluding the concept of the good from the definition of life, understands life to be in the animal existence, and so it sees the good of life only in the animal good and coincides with the errors of the crowd.

In either case the error is due to the confusion of the personality, of the individuality, as science calls it, with the rational consciousness. Rational consciousness includes personality; but personality does not include rational consciousness. Personality is a property of an animal, and of man as an animal. Rational consciousness is the property of man alone.

An animal can live for its body only, — nothing prevents it from living so; it gratifies its personality, and unconsciously serves its species, and does not know that it is a personality; but rational man cannot live for his body alone. He cannot live so, because he knows that he is a personality, and so he knows that other beings are just such personalities as he, and he knows what must happen from the relations of these personalities.

If man strove only after the good of his personality and loved only himself, his personality, he would not know that other beings love themselves, just as animals do not know it; but if man knows that he is a personality striving after the same that all the beings surrounding him strive after, he can no longer strive after the good which is visible to his rational consciousness as evil, and his life can no longer consist in the striving after the good of personality. It only seems at times to man that his striving after the good has for its object the gratification of the demands of his animal personality. This deception is due to this, that man takes what he sees to be going on in his animal as the aim of the activity of his rational consciousness. What takes place is like what a man would do if he were guided in his wakeful state by what he sees in his dream.

And then, if this deception is maintained by the false teachings, there takes place in man the confusion of the personality with the rational consciousness.

But the rational consciousness always shows man that the gratification of the demands of his animal personality cannot be his good, and, therefore, his life, and irrepressibly draws him toward that good and, therefore, toward that life, which is peculiar to him and is not contained in his animal personality.

People generally think and say that the renunciation of the good of personality is a heroic deed, a praiseworthy quality in man. The renunciation of the good of personality is not a praiseworthy quality, a heroic deed, but an inevitable condition of man's life. At the same time that man recognizes himself as a personality distinct from the whole world he recognizes also other personalities as distinct from the whole world, and their mutual connection, and the phantasm of the good of his personality, and the actuality of only such a good as can satisfy his rational consciousness.

For an animal an activity which has not for its aim the good of personality, but is directly opposed to this good, is a negation of life: but for man it is the very opposite. Man's activity which is directed only to the acquisition of the good of personality is a full negation of human life.

For an animal, which has no rational consciousness that shows to it the wretchedness and finality of its existence, the good of personality and the resulting continuation of the species of the personality are the highest aim of life. But for man personality is only that stage of his existence from which the true good of his life, which does not coincide with the good of his personality, is revealed to him.

The consciousness of the personality is for man not life, but that limit at which his life begins, that life which consists in a greater and ever greater attainment of the good which is peculiar to him, and which is independent of the good of the animal personality.

According to the current conception of life, man's life is a piece of time from the birth to the death of his animal. But this is not man's life; it is only man's existence as an animal personality. Man's life is something which is manifested only in animal existence, just as organic life is something which is manifested only in the existence of matter.

The visible aims of man's personality at first appear to him as the aims of his life. These aims are visible and so seem intelligible.

But the aims which are indicated to him by his rational consciousness seem unintelligible, because they are invisible. At first it is hard for a man to renounce the visible and abandon himself to the invisible.

To a man who is corrupted by the false teachings of the world, the demands of the animal, which are accomplished of themselves and are visible, both in himself and in others, seem simple and clear, while the new, invisible demands of the rational consciousness appear as contradictory; their gratification, which is not accomplished of itself, but is the action of the person, appears complex and obscure. One feels terribly and ill at ease in renouncing the visible conception of life and abandoning oneself to its invisible consciousness, just as a child would feel terribly and ill at ease when it is born, if it could feel its birth; — but what is to be done, since it is obvious that the visible conception leads to death, and the invisible consciousness alone gives life?

XVI.

THE ANIMAL PERSONALITY IS AN INSTRUMENT OF LIFE

No reflections can conceal from man that obvious, undoubted truth that his personal existence is something constantly perishing, tending toward death, and that, therefore, there can be no life in his animal personality.

Man cannot help but see that the existence of his personality from birth and childhood to old age and death is nothing but a constant waste and diminution of this animal personality, which ends in inevitable death; and so the consciousness of his life in the personality, which includes the desire for the increase and indestructibleness of the personality, cannot help but be a constant contradiction, and the suffering cannot help but be an evil, whereas the only meaning of his life is a striving after the good.

No matter what the true good of man may consist in, his renunciation of the good of his animal personality is inevitable for him.

The renunciation of the good of the animal personality is a law of human life. If it is not accomplished freely, finding its expression in the subjection to the rational consciousness, it is accomplished in each man violently at the carnal death of his animal, when under the burden of his suffering he wishes this much: to be freed from the agonizing consciousness of the perishing personality, and to pass over to another kind of existence.

Man's entrance into life and life itself are like what takes place with a horse which the master takes out of the stable and hitches to a wagon. The horse, upon coming out of the stable and seeing the light and feeling its freedom, imagines that life lies in this freedom, but it is hitched to the wagon and the reins are pulled. It feels a load at its back, and if it thinks that its life consists in running at large, it struggles, and falls, and at times is killed. If it is not killed, it has but two ways out: either it will pull the load, and will find out that the load is not so heavy and the pulling not a torture, but a pleasure, or it will become unmanageable, and then the master will take it to the treadmill, will tie it with a rope to the wall, and the wheel will begin to turn under it, and it will walk in the darkness in one spot and suffer, but its strength will not be lost in vain: it will do its unwilling labour, and the law will be accomplished upon it. The only difference will be, that the first will work cheerfully, and the second unwillingly and painfully.

"But what is this personality for, whose good I, the man, must renounce, in order that I may obtain life?" say people who recognize their animal existence as life. "Why is this consciousness of personality given to man, if it is opposed to the manifestation of the true life?"

This question may be answered by a similar question, which an animal striving after its aims of preserving its life and species might put.

For what purpose, it would ask, are this matter and its laws, mechanical, physical, chemical, and other laws, with which it has to struggle, in order that it may attain its ends? "If it is my vocation," the animal would say, "to materialize the life of the animal, why are there so many barriers which I must overcome?"

It is clear to us that all matter and its laws, with which the animal struggles, and which it subjects to itself for the existence of its animal personality, are not barriers, but means for the attainment of its ends. The animal lives by nothing but the transformation of matter and by its laws. Even so it is in the life of man. The animal personality, in which man finds himself and which he is called to submit to his rational consciousness, is not a barrier, but a means for attaining the aims of his good: the animal personality is for man that tool with which he works. The animal personality is for man that spade which is given to the rational being that it may dig with it and, digging, dull it and sharpen it again, and waste it away, but not to clean it and put it away. It is the talent given him for increase, and not to be hid in the ground.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." In these words it says that it is impossible to keep what must perish and perishes without cessation, and that only by renouncing what perishes and must perish, — our animal personality, do we get our true life, which does not perish and cannot perish. It says that our true life begins only when we cease regarding as life what has not been and could not be life for us, — our animal existence. It says that he who will keep the spade, which he has for the purpose of obtaining by it food for the sustenance of his life, will, by saving the spade, lose both his food and his life.

XVII.

BIRTH BY THE SPIRIT

"You must be born again," says Christ. Not that man is ordered by any one to be born anew, but that man is inevitably brought to it. To have life, he must be born again in this existence through his rational consciousness.

The rational consciousness is given to man in order that he may place his life in that good which is revealed to him through his rational consciousness. He who places his life in this good, has life; but he who does not place his life in it, but in the good of the animal personality, by this very fact deprives himself of life. In this consists the definition of life as given by Christ.

Men who recognize as life their striving after the good of personality, hear these words and, not that they do not acknowledge them, — they do not understand them, and cannot understand them. These words appear to them either meaningless, or meaning very little, — designating a certain turgidly sentimental and mystical mood, as they like to call it. They cannot understand the meaning of these words, which express an explanation of a condition which is incomprehensible to them, just as a dry, intact seed could not comprehend the condition of a moist and germinating seed. For the dry kernels the sun, which with its beams shines on the seed springing into life, is only a meaningless incident, — a little more heat and light; but for the germinating seed it is the cause of birth to life. Even so for men, who have not reached the inner contradiction of the animal personality and the rational consciousness, the light of the sun of reason is only a meaningless incident and sentimental, mystical words. The sun brings only those to life in whom life has already begun to germinate.

No one has ever found out how it germinates, why, when, where, not only in man, but also in the animal and the plant. Of its germination in man Christ has said that no one knows this, nor ever can know.

Indeed, what can man know of how life is germinating in him? Life is the light of men, life is life, — the beginning of everything; how, then, can man know how it germinates? What germinates and perishes for man is that which does not live, which is manifested in time and space; but the true life *is*, and so, as far as man is concerned, it can neither germinate nor perish.

XVIII.

THE DEMANDS OF THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

YES, the rational consciousness tells man indubitably and incontrovertibly that with that structure of the world which he knows out of his personality, there can be no good for him, for his personality. His life is a desire for the good for himself, yes, for himself, and he sees that this good is impossible. But, strange to say, though he sees unquestionably that this good is impossible for him, he none the less lives with the one desire for this impossible good, — the good for himself alone.

A man with an awakened (only an awakened) rational consciousness, which has not yet subdued the animal personality, if he does not kill himself, lives only in order that he may realize this impossible good: he lives and acts that only he himself may obtain the good, that all men and even all beings may live and work so as to furnish him with comfort and pleasure, and that he shall experience no suffering and no death.

Strange to say, though experience, and the observation of the lives of all who surround him, and reason show incontestably to each man that it is unattainable and that it is impossible to compel other living beings to stop loving themselves, and to love only him, — in spite of this, the life of each man consists only in this, that by wealth, power, honour, glory, flattery, deceit, in one way or another, he may compel other beings to live, not for themselves, but for him alone, — to compel all beings to love not themselves, but him alone.

Men have done all they can with this aim in view, and at the same time they see that they do the impossible. "My life is a striving after the good," man says to himself. "The good is possible for me only when all will love me more than themselves; but all beings love themselves only, — consequently, all I do in order to compel them to love me is useless. It is useless, but I can do nothing else."

Ages pass: men find out the distance from the luminaries, determine their weight, find out the composition of the sun and the stars, but the question as to how the demands of the personal good are to be harmonized with the life of the world, which excludes the possibility of this good, remains for the majority of men just as insoluble a question as it was for men five thousand years ago.

The rational consciousness says to each man: "Yes, you can have the good, but only when all will love you more than themselves." And the same rational consciousness shows man that it cannot be, because they all love themselves alone. And so the only good, which is revealed to man by his rational consciousness, is again concealed by it.

Ages pass, and the riddle about the good of man's life remains the same insoluble riddle for the majority of men. Meanwhile the riddle has been solved long ago, and all those who learn the answer to the riddle always marvel how it is they did not themselves solve it: it seems to them that they knew it long ago, but only forgot it, — so simple and so obtrusive is the solution of the riddle, which has seemed so difficult amidst the false teachings of our world.

Do you want all to live for you, and all to love you more than themselves? There is but one condition under which your wish may be fulfilled. It is that condition when all beings shall live for the good of others and shall love others more than themselves. Only then you and all beings would be loved by all, and you would among their number receive the good which you desire. But if the good is possible for you only when all beings love you more than themselves, you also, as a living being, must love other beings more than yourself.

Only with such conditions are the good and the life of man possible, and only with this condition is that destroyed which poisoned man's life, — the struggle of the beings, the agony of sufferings, and the terror of death.

Indeed, what is it that formed the impossibility of the personal existence? In the first place, the struggle among themselves of the beings seeking their personal good. In the second place, the deception of pleasures, which leads to waste of life, to satiety, and to sufferings, and, in the third place, death. But we need only admit mentally that man may exchange the striving after the good of his personality for the striving after the good of other beings, in order that the impossibility of the good be destroyed, and that the good appear to man as accessible. Looking at the world from his notion of life as a striving after the personal good, man saw in the world an irrational struggle of beings destroying one another. But he needs only acknowledge his life to consist in the striving after the good of others, in order that he may see something quite different in the world: by the side of the incidental phenomena of the struggle of the beings — a constant mutual service of these beings, a service without which the existence of the world is unthinkable.

We need only admit this, and all our former senseless activity which is directed upon the unattainable good of personality gives way to another activity, which is in harmony with the law of the world and is directed upon the attainment of the greatest possible good for oneself and for the world.

Another cause of the wretchedness of the personal life and of the impossibility of man's good was this, — the illusoriness of the pleasures of personality, which wasted life and led to satiety and suffering. Man need only recognize his life as consisting in the striving after the good of others, and the illusory thirst of enjoyments is destroyed; but the idle and agonizing activity, which is directed to the filling of the bottomless barrel of the animal activity, gives way to an activity, in accord with the laws of reason, directed toward sustaining the life of other beings, an activity necessary for his good; and the agony of the personal suffering, which destroys the activity of man, gives way to the feeling of compassion for others, which calls to life an unquestionably fruitful and most joyful activity.

The third cause of the wretchedness of the personal life was the dread of death. Man needs only recognize his life as not consisting in the good of his animal personality, but in the good of other beings, and the scarecrow of death for ever disappears from his eyes.

The dread of death is due only to the fear of losing the good of life at its carnal death. But if man could place his good in the good of other beings, that is, if he loved them more than himself, death would not present itself to him as that cessation of the good and of life, as which it presents itself to a man who lives only for himself. To a man living for others death could not present itself as a cessation of the good and of life, because the good and life of other beings is not only not destroyed by the life of a man who serves them, but very frequently is increased and strengthened by the sacrifice of his life.

XIX.

THE CONFIRMATION OF THE DEMANDS OF THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

"But this is not life," replies the provoked erring human consciousness. "This is a renunciation of life, suicide." "I know nothing of the kind," replies the rational consciousness: "I know that such is man's life, and that there is no other and can be no other. I know more than this: I know that such a life is both life and the good for man and for the whole world. I know that with the former view of the world, my life and the life of everything existing was evil and absurd; but with this view it appears as a realization of that law of reason which is implanted in man. I know that the greatest, infinitely increasable good of the life of each being may be obtained only by this law of each man serving all, and all men each."

"But if this may be a thinkable law, it is not a law of reality," replies the provoked erring consciousness of man. "Others do not love me more than themselves, and so I cannot love them more than myself and for their sake deprive myself of pleasures and submit to sufferings. I have no business with the law of reason; I want enjoyments for myself and liberation from sufferings for myself. Now there exists a struggle of the beings among themselves, and if I alone will not struggle, others will crush me. It makes no difference to me by what road the greatest welfare of all is mentally attained, — I now need the actual good for myself," says the false consciousness.

"I know nothing about this," replies the rational consciousness. "All I know is that that which you call your enjoyments will be a good for you only when you will not take them yourself, but others will give them to you; and your enjoyments will be superfluous and a source of suffering, as they now are, when you shall seize them yourself. You will be freed from actual sufferings only when others shall free you from them, and not you yourself, as you now do, when for fear of imaginary sufferings you deprive yourself of life itself.

"I know that the life of personality, a life which demands that all should love me alone, and that I should love myself only, and which would offer me the greatest number of enjoyments and would liberate me from sufferings and death, is the greatest unceasing suffering. The more I shall love myself and struggle with others, the more they will hate me and the more fiercely will they struggle with me; the more I shall defend myself against suffering, the more painful will they be; the more I shall defend myself against death, the more terrible will it be.

"I know that, no matter what a man may do, he will not receive any good unless he will live in conformity with the law of his life. But the law of his life is not struggle, but, on the contrary, a mutual service of the beings."

"But I know life only in my personality. It is impossible for me to assume my life in the good of other beings."

"I know nothing of the kind," says the rational consciousness: "I know only this much, that my life and the life of the world, which heretofore presented themselves to me as an evil absurdity, now present themselves to me as one rational whole, living and striving after one and the same good, through subjection to one and the same law of reason, which I know in myself."

"But this is impossible for me!" says the erring consciousness. And yet there is no man who has not done this very impossible thing, who has not looked for the best good of his life in this very impossible thing.

"It is impossible to seek one's good in the good of other beings," — and yet there is no man who does not know a state in which the good of the beings outside of him becomes his good. "It is impossible to seek the good in labours and sufferings for another person," — but let a man abandon himself to this feeling of compassion, and the enjoyments of personality lose all meaning for him, and the force of his life passes into labours and sufferings for the good of others; and the sufferings and labours become a good for him. "It is impossible to sacrifice one's life for the good of others," but a man need only experience this feeling, and death is not only not visible and terrible to him, but appears to him as the highest accessible good.

A rational man cannot help but see that, if he admits mentally the possibility of an exchange of his striving after his own good for the striving after the good of other beings, his life, instead of its former senselessness and wretchedness, becomes rational and good. Nor can he help seeing that, by admitting the same comprehension of life in other men and beings as well, the life of the whole world, instead of what before appeared as madness and cruelty, now becomes the highest rational good which man can at all wish for: instead of the former meaninglessness and aimlessness, it now acquires for him a rational meaning. To such a man the aim of the world's life appears in an endless enlightenment and union of the beings of the world, toward which life proceeds, and in which at first men, and then all beings, submitting more and more to the law of reason, will understand (what now is given to man alone to understand) that the good of life is attained not by the striving of each being after its personal good, but by the striving, in conformity with the law of reason, of each being after the good of all others.

More than this: if man only admits the possibility of an exchange of the striving after one's own good for the striving after the good of other beings, he cannot help but see this also, that this same gradual, increasing renunciation of his personality and the transference of the aim of his activity from himself into other beings is the forward movement of humanity and of those living beings which are nearest to man. Man cannot help but see in history that the movement of the general life does not consist in the intensification and increase of the struggle of the beings among themselves, but, on the contrary, in the diminution of the discord and the weakening of the struggle: that the movement of life consists in this alone, that the world, from hostility and discord, through subjection to reason, passes more and more to concord and union. Admitting this, man cannot help but see that those who devoured one another no longer devour one another; that those who killed captives and their own children no longer kill them; that the military who used to pride themselves on murder no longer boast of it; that those who established slavery now abolish it; that men who used to kill animals are beginning to tame them and kill them less; that instead of feeding on the flesh of animals men now begin to feed on their eggs and milk; and that the destruction in the world of plants is growing less. Man sees that the best men of humanity condemn the search after enjoyments and admonish people to be temperate, while the best men, who are extolled by posterity, show examples of sacrifices of their existence for the good of others. Man sees that what he has admitted only on account of the demands of reason is taking place in reality in the world and is confirmed by the past life of humanity.

More than this: more powerfully and more convincingly than by reason and history, this same thing, as though from another source, is pointed out to man by the striving of his heart, which, as to an immediate good, is drawing him on to the same activity which reason points out to him, and which in his heart is expressed by love.

XX.

THE DEMAND OF PERSONALITY SEEMS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE DEMAND OF THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Reason, and reflection, and history, and the inner feeling, — everything, it seems, convinces man of the correctness of such a comprehension of life: but to a man who is brought up in the teaching of the world it none the less appears that the gratification of the demands of his rational consciousness and of his feeling cannot be the law of his life.

"Not to struggle with others for one's own good, not to seek enjoyments, not to ward off suffering, and not to fear death! But this is impossible: it is the renunciation of all life! And how can I renounce life, since I feel the demands of my personality and with my reason recognize the legality of these demands," the cultured people say with full assurance.

Now here is a remarkable phenomenon. Simple working people, who have exercised their reasoning capacity but a little, hardly ever defend the demands of personality and always feel in themselves the demands which are contrary to the demands of personality; but the full negation of the demands of the rational consciousness and, above all, the rejection of the legality of these demands and the defence of the rights of personality are to be found only among rich and refined men, who are trained in reasoning.

An intellectual, pampered, idle person will always prove that personality has its inalienable rights; but a hungry man will not prove that a man must eat, — he knows that all men know that, and that it is impossible to prove or disprove it: he will simply eat.

This is due to the fact that a simple, a so-called uncultured, man, who has worked with his body all his life, has not distorted his reason and has retained it in its purity and force.

But a man who has all his life thought not merely of insignificant, trifling matters, but also of such as are improper for a man to think of, has distorted his reason: it is not free in him. His reason is occupied with improper matters, with the consideration of the needs of his personality, — with their development and increase, and with the invention of means for their gratification.

"But I feel the demands of my personality, and so these demands are legitimate," say the so-called cultured people, who are educated by the worldly teaching.

Nor can they help feeling the demands of their personality. The whole life of these people is directed upon the supposed increase of the good of personality, and the good of personality appears to them to be in the gratification of needs. By the needs of personality they mean those conditions of the existence of personality toward which they have directed their reason. Now these cognized needs, — such as their reason is directed upon, — in consequence of this cognition grow infinitely, and the gratification of these increasing needs shields from them the demands of their true life.

The so-called social science puts at the basis of its investigations the study of the needs of man, forgetting the circumstance, so inconvenient for this teaching, that either a man has no needs whatsoever, as in the case of a man who commits suicide or starves himself, or there is literally an infinite number of them.

There are as many needs of the existence of the animal man as there are sides of this existence; and there are as many sides as there are radii in the globe: there are the needs of food, drink, breathing, and the exercise of all the muscles and nerves; the needs of labour, rest, pleasure, and domestic life; the needs of science, art, religion, and their diversity; the needs in all these relations of the child, the youth, the adult, the old man, the girl, the mature woman, the old woman; the needs of the Chinaman, the Parisian, the Russian, the Laplander; the needs which correspond to the habits of races, to the diseases. . . .

We may count them up to the end of time, without mentioning all those in which the needs of man's personal existence consists. All the conditions of existence may be needs, and of conditions of existence there is an infinite number.

However, by needs we mean only those conditions which are cognized; but the cognized conditions, the moment they are cognized, lose their actual meaning and receive that exaggerated significance given to them by the reason which is directed upon them, and conceal the true life.

What is called needs, that is, the conditions of man's animal conditions, may be compared with an endless number of expansible globules, of which we may imagine a body to consist. All the globules are equal and occupy their own places, without exerting any pressure on one another as long as the globules are not expanded: even so all needs are equal and have their place, and they are not felt morbidly as long as they are not cognized. But it is enough to expand one globule until it occupies more place than the rest taken together, and it will press against them and be pressed against. The same is true of the needs: the rational consciousness need but be directed upon one of them, and this cognized need occupies all life and causes man's whole being to suffer.

XXI.

WHAT IS DEMANDED IS NOT A RENUNCIATION OF PERSONALITY, BUT ITS SUBJECTION TO THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Yes, the affirmation that man does not feel the demands of his rational consciousness, but only the needs of personality, is nothing but an assertion that our animal appetites, to the intensification of which we have directed our whole reason, have taken possession of us and conceal from us our true human life. The weeds of the rankly growing vices have choked the sprouts of the true life.

How can it be otherwise in our world, since it has been asserted outright by those who regard themselves as the teachers of others that the highest perfection of the individual is an all-sided development of the refined needs of his personality; that the good of the masses consists in this, that they should have as many needs as possible and should be able to gratify them; that the good of men consists in the gratification of their needs.

How can people who are brought up in such a teaching help affirming that they do not feel the demands of the rational consciousness, but only the needs of personality? How can they feel the demands of reason, when all their reason has gone without a residue on the intensification of their appetites? And how can they renounce the demands of their appetites, when these appetites have swallowed their whole life?

"The renunciation of personality is impossible," these men generally say, intentionally trying to distort the question and substituting the idea of renunciation for the idea of the subjection of personality to the law of reason.

"It is unnatural," they say, "and so impossible."

But no one is saying anything about the renunciation of personality. Personality is for a rational man the same that breathing and the circulation of the blood are for the animal personality. How can the animal personality renounce the circulation of the blood? It is impossible even to speak of this. Even so it is impossible for a rational man to speak of the renunciation of personality. Personality is for a rational man just as important a condition of his life as the circulation of the blood is a condition of the existence of his animal personality.

Personality, as an animal personality, cannot even put forth any demands, and it never does. These demands are put forth by the falsely directed reason, which is directed, not upon guiding life, not upon illuminating it, but on fanning the appetites of personality.

The demands of the animal personality can always be gratified. A man cannot say: "What shall I eat? or what shall I put on?" All these needs are secured to man as much as they are to a bird or a flower, if he lives a rational life. Indeed, what thinking man can believe that he can diminish the wretchedness of his existence by provisions for his personality?

The wretchedness of man's existence is not due to the fact that he is a personality, but to the fact that he recognizes the existence of his personality as life and a good. Only in this case do there appear a contradiction, a doubling, and suffering for man.

Man's sufferings begin only when he uses the force of his reason for the intensification and enlargement of the endlessly expanding demands of personality, in order that he may conceal from himself the demands of reason.

It is impossible and unnecessary to renounce personality, or any of the conditions in which man exists; but what one can and must do is not to recognize these conditions as life itself. One can and must make use of the given conditions of life, but one cannot and must not look upon these conditions as upon an aim of life. Not to renounce personality, but to renounce the good of personality and to cease recognizing personality as life, this is what a man must do in order that he may return to the oneness, and in order that the good, the striving after which forms his life, may be accessible to him.

Ever since remote antiquity the teaching that the recognition of the life in the personality is a destruction of life, and that the renunciation of the good of personality is the only way for obtaining life, has been preached by the great teachers of humanity.

"Yes, but what is this? It is Buddhism," men of our time generally reply to this. "It is Nirvana, it is standing on a pillar."

And, having said this, it appears to the men of our time that they have in the most successful manner possible rebutted what all know very well, and what cannot be concealed from any one, — that the personal life is wretched and has no meaning whatever.

"This is Buddhism, Nirvana," they say, and it seems to them that with these words they have rebutted everything that has been accepted by billions of people, and that each of us knows full well in the depth of his heart, — namely, that the life for the purposes of personality is destructive and meaningless, and that, if there is any way out of this destructiveness and meaninglessness, it unquestionably leads through the renunciation of the good of personality.

They are not in the least troubled by the facts that the greater half of humanity has always understood life in this manner, that the greatest minds have comprehended life in the same way, and that it cannot be comprehended otherwise. They are so convinced that if all the questions of life are not solved in the most satisfactory manner, they are removed by telephones, operettas, bacteriology, electric light, roburite, etc., that the idea of the renunciation of the good of the personal life presents itself to them only as an echo of ancient ignorance.

In the meantime the unfortunate people do not suspect that the grossest Hindoo, who for years stands on one leg in the name of renouncing the good of personality for the sake of Nirvana, is incomparably more of a live man than they, the bestialized men of our contemporary European society, who fly over the whole world on railroads and in the electric light show their bestial condition to the whole world. This Hindoo has come to understand that there is a contradiction between the life of personality and the rational life, and he solves it the best he knows how; but the men of our cultured class not only fail to understand this contradiction, but even do not believe that it exists.

The proposition that human life is not the existence of man's personality, acquired by the millennial spiritual labour of all humanity, has become for man (not the animal) in the moral world an even more undoubted and indestructible truth than the motion of the earth and the laws of gravitation. Every thinking person, whether he be a learned man, an ignoramus, an old man, a child, understands and knows this: it is concealed only from the most savage people in Africa and Australia, and from the brutalized men of leisure in the European cities and capitals. This truth has become the possession of humanity and if humanity does not retrograde in its auxiliary knowledge of mechanics, algebra, astronomy, it will still less retrograde in its fundamental and chief knowledge of the determination of its life. It is impossible to forget and wipe out from the consciousness of humanity what it has carried away from its life of many millenniums, — the conviction of the vanity, meaninglessness, and wretchedness of the personal life. The attempt at reëstablishing the antediluvial savage conception of life as personal existence, with which the so-called science of our European world is occupied, shows only more obviously the growth of the rational consciousness of humanity, and makes it palpably clear that humanity has outgrown its baby clothes. Both the philosophical theories of self-destruction and the practice of suicides, increasing in a terrible proportion, show how impossible it is for humanity to return to the defunct stage of consciousness.

Life as personal existence has been outlived by humanity, and it is impossible to return to it and to forget that man's personal existence has no meaning. No matter what we may write, or say, or discover, no matter how our personal life may be perfected, the negation of the possibility of the good of personality remains an imperturbable truth for every rational man of our time.

"And yet it moves!" It is not a question of rejecting the propositions of a Galileo and a Copernicus, and inventing some Ptolemaic circles, — they can no longer be invented, — but of going on and making further deductions from the proposition which has already entered into the consciousness of humanity. The same is true of the proposition about the impossibility of the good of personality, as expressed by the Brahmins, and Buddha, and Lao-tse, and Solomon, and the Stoics, and all the true thinkers of humanity. This proposition must not be concealed from ourselves, nor must it be obviated in every manner possible, but we should clearly and boldly recognize it and make the further deductions from it.

XXII.

THE SENTIMENT OF LOVE IS THE MANIFESTATION OF THE ACTIVITY OF PERSONALITY SUBJECTED TO THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

A RATIONAL being cannot live for the purposes of personality. This is impossible, because all ways are barred for it: all the aims toward which man's animal personality is striving are obviously inaccessible. Rational consciousness points out other aims, and these aims are not only accessible, but also give full satisfaction to man's rational consciousness; at first, however, under the influence of the false teaching of the world, it appears to man that these aims are contrary to his personality.

No matter how much a man, educated in our modern world, with developed, exaggerated appetites of personality, may try to regard himself as being in his rational ego, he does not feel in this ego any striving after life, such as he feels in his animal personality. The rational ego, as it were, contemplates life, but does not live itself and has no impulse to live. The rational ego does not experience any striving after life, but the animal ego must suffer, and so there is but one thing left to do, — to be liberated from life.

Thus the question is unscrupulously solved by those negative philosophers of our time (Schopenhauer, Hartmann), who negate life and yet remain in it, instead of utilizing the opportunity to leave it. And thus this question is conscientiously solved by the suicides, when they step out of life, which presents to them nothing but evil. Suicide appears to them as the only way out from the misapprehension of the human life of our time.

The reasoning of pessimistic philosophy and of the commonest suicides is as follows: "There is an animal ego, in which there is a striving after life; this ego with my striving cannot be gratified; there is another, a rational ego, in which there is no striving at all after life, and which critically contemplates the whole false love of life and the passion of the animal ego, and negates it altogether.

"If I abandon myself to the first, I see that I live senselessly and walk toward wretchedness, sinking deeper and deeper into it. If I abandon myself to the second, the rational ego, there is left in me no striving after life. I see that it is absurd and impossible to live for what alone I want to live for, that is, for the happiness of personality; for the rational consciousness it is, indeed, possible to live, but I see no cause why I should, and I do not want to. To serve that principle from which I originate, God? What for? God, if there is one, will find enough servants without me. And of what good is it to me? One can look at all this play of life as long as one does not get tired of it; and when one gets tired of it one can go away, and kill oneself, — and so I will do."

Such is the contradictory notion of life, which humanity had arrived at before Solomon and before Buddha, and to which its false teachers of our time want to return.

The demands of personality have been carried to the extreme limits of madness. The awakening reason rejects them; but the demands of personalities have branched out to such an extent, have so clogged man's consciousness, that it seems to him that reason negates the whole life. It seems to him that nothing will be left, if he rejects from the consciousness of life everything which his reason negates. He no longer sees what is left. The residue — that residue in which there is life — seems to him as nothing.

But the light shines in darkness, and the darkness cannot comprehend it!

The teaching of truth knows this dilemma, — either senseless existence, or the negation of it, — and solves it.

The teaching, which has always been called the teaching of the good, the teaching of the truth, has shown to people that instead of their deceptive good, which they seek for their animal personality, they not only can at some time, somewhere receive, but always, immediately, here, have an inalienable, real good, which is always accessible to them.

This good is not merely something deduced by reasoning, something which has to be sought somewhere, a good promised somewhere and at some time, but that familiar good after which every uncorrupted human soul strives directly.

All men know from their first years of childhood that, in addition to the good of the animal personality, there is another, better good of life, which is not only independent of the gratification of the appetites of the animal personality, but, on the contrary, is the greater, the greater the renunciation of the good of the animal personality.

This feeling, which solves all the contradictions of the human life and gives the greatest good to man, is known to all men. This feeling is *love.*

Life is the activity of the animal personality, subjected to the law of reason. Reason is that law to which, for its own good, man's animal personality must be submitted. Love is the only rational activity of man.

The animal personality tends toward the good; reason points out to man that deceptiveness of the personal good and leaves one path. The activity on this path is love.

Man's animal personality demands the good; the rational consciousness shows man the wretchedness of all the warring beings: it shows him that there can be no good for his animal personality, and that the one good, which is possible for him, is one with which there is no struggle with other beings, nor a cessation of the good, nor satiety, nor the vision and terror of death.

And as though it were a key specially made for this lock, man finds in his soul a feeling which gives him that very good, which, as the only possible one, reason points out to him. This feeling not only solves the former contradiction of life, but also, as it were, in this very contradiction finds the possibility of its manifestation.

The animal personalities want to make use of man's personality for their own purposes; but the feeling of love draws him on to give his existence for the benefit of other beings.

The animal personality suffers, and these sufferings and their alleviation form the chief subject of the activity of love. The animal personality, striving after the good, with its every breath tends toward evil, — toward death, — the vision of which has impaired every good of personality. But the feeling of love not only destroys this terror, but draws man toward the last sacrifice of his carnal existence for the good of others.

XXIII.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE FEELING OF LOVE IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR MEN WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THEIR LIFE

EVERY man knows that in the feeling of love there is something especial, which is capable of solving all the contradictions of life and of giving to man that full measure of the good in the striving after which his life consists.

"But this feeling, which comes but rarely, does not last long, and its consequence is worse sufferings," say people who do not understand life.

To these men love presents itself, not as that one legitimate manifestation of life, as which it appears to rational consciousness, but only as one of a thousand different casualties of life, — it presents itself as one of those thousand divers moods in which a man happens to be during his existence: it happens that a man plays the dandy, or that he is infatuated with science or with art, or that he is infatuated with his service, with ambition, with acquisition, or that he loves some one. The mood of love presents itself to men who do not comprehend life, not as the essence of human life, but as an accidental mood, — which is as independent of his will as all the others to which man is subject during his life. Frequently we have occasion to read or hear reflections as to love being a certain irregular, agonizing mood which impairs the regular current of life, — something like what must appear to an owl when the sun comes out.

These people, it is true, feel that in the mood of love there is something special, something more important than in all the other moods. But, as they do not understand life, they also fail to understand love, and the condition of love appears to them as wretched and deceptive as all other conditions.

> "To love? But whom?
> It is not worth while for a time,
> And you cannot love one for ever . . ."

These words correctly express the dim consciousness of men that in love there is salvation from the calamities of life, and that something which alone resembles the true good, and at the same time a confession that for men who do not understand life love cannot be an anchor of salvation. There is no one to love, and every love is unenduring. And so love could be a good only if there were any one to love, and if there were one who could be loved for ever. But as such a one does not exist, there is no salvation in love, and love is just such deception and such suffering as everything else.

So, and not otherwise, love can be understood by those who teach and themselves are taught to believe that life is nothing but animal existence.

For such people love does not even correspond to the conception which we all involuntarily connect with the word love. It is not a good activity, which gives the good to the lover and to him who is loved. Love is frequently, in the conception of men who recognize life to be in the animal personality, the same feeling, in consequence of which one mother, for the sake of the good of her babe, takes the milk away from the mother of another hungry infant and suffers from anxiety for the success of the nursing; that feeling, according to which a father, tormenting himself, takes the last piece of bread away from starving people, in order to provide for his own children; that feeling, according to which he who loves a woman suffers from this love and causes her to suffer, when he seduces her, or out of jealousy ruins himself and her; that feeling, which sometimes leads a man to rape a woman; that feeling, by dint of which men, in order to defend the rights of their society, cause harm to others; that feeling, which causes a man to torment himself over some favourite occupation, and by this very occupation to inflict sorrow and suffering on those who surround him; that feeling, by dint of which men will not bear any insult offered to their beloved country, and strew the fields with killed and wounded, both of their own and of strangers.

More than this: the activity of love presents such difficulties for men who recognize life to consist in the good of the animal personality, that its manifestations become not only agonizing, but frequently even impossible. "We must not reflect on love," people who do not understand life generally say, "but abandon ourselves to the immediate feeling of predilection and bias toward people, which we experience, and this is true love."

They are right that we must not reflect on love, that every reflection on love destroys love. But the point is, that only those people can keep from reflecting on love who have already used their reason for the comprehension of life and have renounced the good of the personal life; but those people who do not comprehend life, and exist for the good of the animal personality, cannot help but reflect on it. They must reflect, in order that they may abandon themselves to the feeling which they call love. Every manifestation of this feeling is impossible for them without reflection, without the solution of insoluble questions.

Indeed, men prefer their babes, their friends, their wives, their children, their country, to all other children, wives, friends, countries, and call this sentiment love.

To love means in general to wish to do good. Even so we all understand love, and cannot help but understand it thus. And so I love my child, my wife, my country, that is, I wish my child, my wife, my country, more good than other children, wives, and countries. It never happens, and it cannot happen, that a man loves his child only, or his wife, or his country only. Every man loves at the same time his babe, his wife, his children, his country, and men in general. Meanwhile the conditions of the good, which in his love he wishes various beloved beings, are so connected among themselves that every love activity of a man for one of his beloved beings not only interferes with his activity for others, but even injures others.

And there arise the questions as to how one is to act and in the name of what love. In the name of what love are we to sacrifice another love? Whom shall we love more, to whom do more good, — to the wife or to the children, to the wife and to the children or to the friends? How are we to serve our beloved country, without impairing the love for wife, children, and friends? How, finally, am I to decide the question how much I may sacrifice of my personality which is needed in the service of others? How much must I care for myself, in order that, loving others, I may be able to serve them? All these questions seem very simple for men who do not attempt to give themselves an account of the feeling which they call love; but, far from being simple, they are completely insoluble.

There was good reason why the lawyer put this question to Christ: "Who is my neighbour?" Answers to these questions appear very easy to such people only as forget the true conditions of human life.

Only if men were gods, such as we imagine them to be, would they be able to love certain chosen people, and then only could the preference of some to others be true love. But men are not gods: they exist under those conditions of existence under which all living beings always live on one another, devouring one another, both in the direct and the transferred sense; and man, as a rational being, must know and see it. He must know that every carnal good is obtained by one being only at the expense of another.

No matter how much religious and scientific superstitions may assure people of a future golden age, in which there will be plenty of everything for all men, a rational man sees and knows that the law of his temporal and spatial existence is a struggle of all against each, of each against each and against all.

In this pressure and struggle of animal interests, which form the life of the world, man cannot love chosen ones, as people imagine who do not understand life. Even if a man loves chosen ones, he never loves just one. Every man loves his mother, his wife, his babe, his friends, his country, and even all men. And love is not a mere word (all agree to this), but an activity which is directed upon the good of others. Now this activity does not take place in any definite order, so that at first man becomes aware of the demands of his strongest love, then of his less strong love, and so forth. The demands of love are constantly made manifest and all at once, without any order. A hungry old man, whom I love a little, has just come and asks me to give him the food which I am keeping for a supper for my beloved children; how am I to weigh the demands of my present, less strong love with the future demands of a stronger love?

The same questions were put by the lawyer to Christ: "Who is my neighbour?" Indeed, how shall it be decided whom I must serve, and to what extent? — whether men or my country, whether my country or my friends? whether my friends or my wife? whether my wife or my father? whether my father or my children? whether my children or myself (so that I may be able to serve others, when any need for it shall arise)?

All these certainly are demands of love, and they are all intertwined, so that the gratification of the demands of some deprives man of the possibility of satisfying the others. If I admit that a frozen child may not be clothed, because the garment which they ask of me may some day be of use for my children, I can also refuse to abandon myself to other demands of love in the name of my future children.

The same is true in relation to love of country, of favourite occupations, and of all men. If a man is capable of renouncing the demands of the smallest love of the present, in the name of the demand of the greater love of the future, it is clear that such a man, even though he wished it with all his might, will never be able to weigh in how far he can renounce the demands of the present in the name of the future; and so, being unable to decide the question, he will always choose that manifestation of love which will be agreeable to him, that is, he will not act in the name of love, but in the name of his personality. If a man decides that it is better for him to refrain from the demands of the present, smaller love in the name of another, a future manifestation of a greater love, he is deceiving either himself or others, and loves no one but himself.

There is no love in the future: love is only an activity in the present. A man who does not manifest love in the present has no love.

What takes place is the same as in the conception of life held by men who have no life. If men were animals and had no reason, they would exist like animals, without reflecting on life, and their animal existence would be legitimate and happy. The same is true of love: if men were animals without reason, they would love those whom they love, — their whelps and their flock, — and would not know that they love their whelps and their flock, nor that other wolves love their whelps, and other flocks the members of their flocks, and their love would be that love and that life which would be possible on that stage of consciousness which they occupy.

But men are rational beings and cannot help seeing that other beings have the same love for their own, and that, therefore, these sentiments of love must come into conflict and cause something which is not good and the very opposite to the concept of love.

But if men use their reason for the purpose of justifying and strengthening that animal, unpropitious sentiment, which they call love, by ascribing monstrous proportions to this feeling, it not only fails to be good, but also makes of man — this is an old truth — a very evil and terrible animal. What takes place is like what is said in the Gospel: "If the light which be in thee is darkness, how great is the darkness?" If there were nothing in man but love for himself and for his children, there would not be even one hundredth part of that evil which now exists among men. Ninety-nine hundredths of the evil among men is due to that false feeling which they, extolling it, call love, and which resembles love as much as the life of an animal resembles that of a man.

What people, who do not know life, call love, is only certain preferences of one set of conditions of the good of personality over another. When a man, who does not understand life, says that he loves his wife, or babe, or friend, he merely says that the presence of his wife, his child, his friend, in his life increases the good of his personal life.

These preferences have the same relation to love that existence has to life. And as people who do not understand life call existence life, so these people mean by love the preference of certain conditions of their personal existence over others.

These sentiments, the preferences for certain beings, for example, for one's children or even for certain occupations, for example, for science, or art, we call love; but such sentiments of preference, infinitely diversified, form the whole complexity of the visible and palpable animal life of men and cannot be called love, because they lack the chief sign of love, — an activity which has the good both for its aim and consequence.

The passionateness of the manifestation of these preferences only shows the energy of the animal personality. The passionateness of the preference of one set of men to others, which is incorrectly called love, is only a wild tree on which true love may be grafted and may bring forth its fruits. But as the wild tree is not an apple-tree and brings forth no fruit, or only bitter fruit instead of sweet, so bias is not love and does no good to men, or produces a still greater evil. Consequently the greatest evil is caused the world by the much lauded love of woman, of children, of friends, not to speak of the love of science, of art, of country, which is nothing but a temporary preference of certain conditions of animal life over others.

XXIV.

TRUE LOVE IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE RENUNCIATION OF THE GOOD OF PERSONALITY

True love becomes possible only with the renunciation of the good of the animal personality.

The possibility of true love begins only when man has come to understand that there does not exist for him the good of his animal personality. Only then all the sap of his life passes into the one ennobled graft of true love, which is growing with the full vigour of the wild trunk of the animal personality. Christ's teaching is a grafting of this love, as he himself said. He said that he, his love, is the one vine which can bear fruit, and that every branch which does not bear fruit will be cut off.

Only he who has not merely understood, but comprehends with his whole life that "he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall save it," only he who has come to understand that he who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will save it for the eternal life, only he will know true love.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. If you love those who love you, it is not love; love your enemies, love those who hate you."

Not in consequence of their love of father, son, wife, friends, good and dear people, as is generally believed, do people renounce their personality, but only in consequence of the consciousness of the vanity of the existence of personality, of the consciousness of the impossibility of its good, and so man, in consequence of the renunciation of the life of personality, learns to know true love, and can truly love his father, son, wife, children, and friends.

Love is the preference of other beings over oneself, over one's animal personality.

The oblivion of the nearest interests of personality for the purpose of attaining the more distant aims of the same personality, as happens in the case of so-called love, which has not grown out of self-renunciation, is only the preference of some beings over others for the purpose of one's personal good. True love, before becoming an active feeling, must be a certain condition. The beginning of love, its root, is not an outburst of feeling which dims reason, as it is generally imagined to be, but a very rational, bright, and so calm and joyful state, which is peculiar to children and rational people.

This state is one of good-will toward all men, which is inherent in children, but which in adults comes only with renunciation and is strengthened proportionately with the renunciation of the good of personality. How often we may hear the words, "It is all the same to me, I need nothing," and with these words to see a loveless relation to men! But let any man even once, in a moment of ill-will toward men, say sincerely, from his soul, "It is all the same to me, I need nothing," and really not wish anything, even though for a short time, and he will find out through this simple internal experience how, in proportion with the sincerity of his renunciation, all ill-will disappears at once, and how good-will toward all men, which heretofore was locked up in his heart, will burst forth in a torrent.

Indeed love is a preference of other beings over oneself, — this is the way we all understand love, and cannot understand otherwise. The magnitude of love is the magnitude of a fraction, the numerator of which, my bias, my sympathy for others is not in my power; but the denominator, my love of myself, may be indefinitely increased or diminished by me, in accordance with the meaning which I shall ascribe to my animal personality; but the reflections of our world on love and its degrees are reflections on the magnitude of fractions judged by their numerators alone, without any reference to their denominators.

True love has always for its basis the renunciation of the good of personality and the consequent good-will toward all men. Only on this universal good-will can true love for certain persons grow, — the love for friends and for strangers, and only such love gives the true good of life and solves the seeming contradiction between the animal and the rational consciousness.

Love which has not for its basis the renunciation of personality and the consequent good-will toward all men, is only an animal life and is subject to the same and even greater calamities and even greater misunderstanding than the life without this apparent love. The sentiment of bias, called love, not only fails to remove the struggle of existence, to free the personality from the chase after enjoyments, and to save from death, but also obscures life, embitters the struggle, intensifies the eagerness for enjoyments for oneself and for others, and increases the terror of death for oneself and for others.

A man who assumes all his life to lie in the existence of the animal personality cannot love, because love must present itself to him as an activity which is directly opposed to his life. The life of such a man lies only in the good of the animal existence, whereas love first of all demands a sacrifice of this good. Even if a man who does not understand life wanted sincerely to abandon himself to the activity of love, he would not be able to do so until he understood life and changed all his relation to it. A man who has put all his life into the good of the animal personality, all his life increases the means of his animal good, acquiring wealth and preserving it, makes others serve his animal good, and distributes this good among those persons who are most needed for the good of his personality. How can he give up his life, since his life is not supported by himself, but by other men? Still harder it is for him to choose to whom of the persons he prefers he is to transmit the accumulated good and whom to serve.

To be able to give up his life, he must first give up that surplus which he takes from others for the good of his life, and then do the impossible: he must solve the question which men he is to serve with his life. Before he will be able to love, that is, to do good by sacrificing himself, he must stop hating, that is, doing evil, and stop preferring some people to others for the good of his personality.

The activity of man's love, which always satisfies him and others, is possible only for him who does not recognize any good in the personal life and so does not trouble himself about this false good, and in this way has freed in himself the good-will for all men, which is peculiar to man. The good of life for such a man is in love, as the good of a plant is in the light, and so, as a plant that is not covered by anything cannot and does not ask in what direction it shall grow, whether the light is good, and whether it had not better wait for another, more favourable light, but takes that one light which there is in the world and tends toward it, — so a man who has renounced the good of personality does not discuss what he must give back of what he has taken from other people and to what beloved beings, and whether there is not some better love than the one which prefers demands, — but gives himself and his existence to that love which is accessible to him and is before him. Only such a love gives full satisfaction to man's rational nature

XXV.

LOVE IS THE ONLY FULL ACTIVITY OF THE TRUE LIFE

THERE is no other love than the one which makes us lay down our life for our friends. Love is then only love when it is a self-sacrifice. Only when a man gives to another his time, his forces, when he sacrifices his body for a beloved object, gives his life to it, — only that we all recognize as love, and only in such love do we all find the good, the reward of love. And the world exists by nothing else than that there is such love in men. A mother who nurses her babe gives herself, her body, outright as food for her children, who without it would not be living. And this is love. Even so every labourer gives himself, his body, as food for another, when he wears away his body in work for the good of others and approaches death. Such love is possible for such a man only for whom between the possibility of self-sacrifice and those beings whom he loves there is no obstacle for the sacrifice. A mother who turns her child away to a wet-nurse cannot love it; a man who acquires and keeps his money cannot love.

"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. . . . Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. . . . Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love."

Only such love gives the true life to men.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

"And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," the lawyer said to Christ. And to this Christ replied: "Thou hast said the truth, do like that, that is, love God and thy neighbour, and thou shalt live."

True love is life itself.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," says Christ's disciple. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

Only he who loves lives.

Love is according to Christ's teaching life itself, not irrational, suffering, perishable, but blessed and infinite life. And we all know it. Love is not a deduction of reason, not the consequence of a certain activity; it is the most joyous activity of life, which surrounds us on all sides, and which we all know in ourselves from the very first recollections of childhood until the false teachings of the world have muddled it in our soul and have deprived us of the possibility of experiencing it.

Love is not a bias for what increases the temporal good of man's personality, as the love for chosen persons or objects, but that striving after the good of what is outside of man, which remains in man after the renunciation of the good of the animal personality.

Who of living men does not know that blessed feeling, which is experienced at least once, most frequently only in earliest childhood, when the soul is not yet muddled by that lie, which drowns life in us, — that blessed feeling of meekness of spirit, when one wants to love all, — relatives, father, mother, brothers, and evil men, and enemies, and the dog, and the horse, and the grass; one wishes only this much, — that all should be happy and comfortable, and one wishes still more that one may be the cause of the happiness of all, and may give one's whole life for the purpose of making all happy and comfortable for ever. This alone is that love in which man's life consists.

This love, in which alone there is life, manifests itself in man's soul as a barely perceptible, tender shoot amidst coarse shoots of weeds, which resemble it, amidst man's various lusts, which we call love. At first it seems to men, and to that man as well, that this shoot, — from which there is to grow a tree for the birds to hide in, — and all the other shoots are one and the same. Men at first even prefer the shoots of the weeds, which grow more rankly, and the only shoot of life is crowded, and dies. But still worse is what happens more frequently: men have heard that among these shoots there is one real, vital shoot, called love, and they tramp it down and in its place begin to raise up another shoot of a weed, calling it love. Worse still: men grasp the shoot itself with their gross hands, and shout, "Here it is, — we have found it; now we know it, and will foster it, — love, love! O highest sentiment, here it is!" And they begin to transplant it and to improve it, and they handle it so roughly and crush it so much that it dies without growing up, and then these people, or others, say: "All this is nonsense, foolishness, sentimentality." The shoot of love, which at its appearance is tender and brooks no touch, is powerful only when full grown. Everything which people will do with it is only worse for it. It needs but one thing, — that nothing should conceal from it the sun of reason, which alone causes it to grow.

XXVI.

THE ENDEAVOURS OF MEN, DIRECTED UPON THE IMPOSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR EXISTENCE, DEPRIVE THEM OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR ONLY, TRUE LIFE

Nothing but the recognition of the illusion and deceptiveness of the animal existence and the liberation of the only, true life of love within man gives him the good. Now, what do men do in order to obtain this good? Men, whose existence consists in the slow annihilation of personality and approximation to the inevitable death of this personality, and who cannot help knowing this, during the whole time of their existence try with their might and main — this is all they busy themselves with — to strengthen this perishable personality, to satisfy its appetites, and thus to deprive themselves of the possibility of their only good of life, — of love.

The activity of men who do not understand life is during the whole time of their existence directed to the struggle for their existence, to the acquisition of pleasures, to the liberation from suffering, and to the removal from themselves of inevitable death.

But the increase of enjoyments increases the tension of the struggle and the sensitiveness to sufferings, and brings death nearer to them. To conceal this approach of death there is but one means, — to increase the enjoyments. But the increase of enjoyments reaches its limit, the enjoyments cannot be increased and pass into sufferings, and all there is left is a sensitiveness to sufferings, and the terror of death coming nearer and nearer amidst nothing but sufferings. There appears the vicious circle: one is the cause of the other, and one intensifies the other. The chief horror of the life of men who do not understand life consists in this, that that which by them is regarded as pleasures (all the pleasures of wealthy people), being such as cannot be evenly distributed among all men, must be taken from others and acquired by force, by evil, which destroys the possibility of that good-will toward men from which love grows. Thus the pleasures are always directly opposed to love, and the greater, the more so; thus, the stronger, the more tense the activity is for the attainment of pleasures, the more impossible becomes the only good accessible to man, — love.

Life is not understood as it is cognized by the rational consciousness, as an invisible, but unquestionable subjection of one's animal personality to the law of reason at every moment of the present, as a liberating good-will toward all men, which is characteristic of man, and as an activity of love resulting from it, but only as a carnal existence in the course of a given interval of time, under definite conditions created by us, which exclude the possibility of good-will toward all men.

To men of the worldly teaching, who have directed their reason to the establishment of certain conditions of existence, it seems that the increase of the good of life is due to a better external arrangement of their existence; but the better external arrangement of their existence depends on greater violence being exerted against people, which is directly opposed to love. Thus, the better the arrangement, the less there is left of the possibility of love, of the possibility of life.

Not having employed their reason for the comprehension of the good of the animal existence, which for all men alike is equal to zero, men recognize this zero as a magnitude which is capable of increase and diminution, and employ as much of their unapplied reason as they have left to this increase and multiplication of the zero.

These men do not see that nothing, zero, no matter by what it be multiplied, remains equal to any other zero; they do not see that the existence of the animal personality of each man is equally wretched and cannot be made happy by any external conditions. These men do not wish to see that not one existence, as a carnal existence, can be happier than another, — that it is a law like this other law, according to which water cannot be raised on a lake above a given general level. The men who have distorted their reason do not see this, and use their distorted reason in this impossible work, and their whole existence passes in this impossible raising of the water at different places on the surface of the lake, — something like what children do in bathing, calling it "brewing beer."

It seems to them that the existences of men may be more and less good and happy. The existence of a poor labourer or a sick man, they say, is bad and unhappy; the existence of a rich or healthy man is good and happy; and they strain all the powers of their reason for the purpose of avoiding a bad, unhappy, poor, and sickly existence and arranging for themselves one which is good, rich, healthy and happy.

The methods of arranging and maintaining these various most happy lives are worked out by generations, and the programmes of these imaginary best lives, as they call their animal existence, are transmitted by inheritance. People vie with each other in the endeavour to maintain that happy *life* which they have inherited from the arrangement of their parents, or try to prepare a new, still happier life for themselves. It seems to these people that maintaining their inherited arrangement of existence or a new existence, which in their opinion is better, they are doing something.

Supporting one another in this deception, men are often so sincerely convinced that life consists in this senseless stamping of the water, the insipidity of which is evident to them, — they convince themselves so much of it, that they contemptuously turn away from the appeal to the true life which they hear all the time in the teaching of the truth, and in the examples of the lives of living men, and in their deadened souls, in which the voice of reason and of love is never fully drowned.

A remarkable thing takes place: men, an enormous majority of men, who have the possibility for a rational life of love, are in the same condition that sheep are in, when they are being dragged out of a burning building; imagining that they are to be thrown into the fire, they employ all their forces for the purpose of struggling with those who want to save them.

Out of the fear of death men do not want to come away from it; out of the fear of suffering men torment themselves and deprive themselves of the good and the life which alone is impossible for them.

XXVII.

THE DREAD OF DEATH IS ONLY THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE UNSOLVED CONTRADICTION OF LIFE

"THERE is no death," the voice of truth tells people. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

"There is no death," all the great teachers of the world have said, and millions of people, who have comprehended the meaning of life, have borne witness to it with their lives. The same is felt in his soul by every living man, in a moment of enlightenment of his consciousness. But men who do not understand life cannot help but fear death. They see it and believe in it.

"What, there is no death?" these men cry, with indignation and malice. "This is a piece of sophistry. Death is before us: it has mowed down millions, and it will mow us down, too. No matter how you may insist that it is not, it will remain. Here it is!"

They are speaking of what they see, just as a deranged person sees the vision which terrifies him. He cannot feel the vision, for the vision has never touched him; he knows nothing of its intention, but he is so afraid of this imaginary vision and suffers from it so much that he is deprived of the possibility of life. The same is true of death. Man does not know his death and can never know it: it has never touched him, and of its intentions he knows nothing. So what is he afraid of?

"It has never seized me yet; but it will seize me, I am sure of that, — it will seize me, and will destroy me. And that is terrible," say people who do not understand life.

If men with a false conception of life were able to reflect calmly, and reasoned correctly on the basis of that conception which they have of life, they would have to come to the conclusion that there is nothing disagreeable or terrible in this, that in my carnal existence there will take place that change which, I see, unceasingly takes place in all beings, and which I call death.

I shall die. Where is the terror in this? Have not very many changes taken place in my carnal existence without causing me fear? Why, then, am I afraid of this change, which has not yet taken place and in which there is not only nothing contrary to my reason and experience, but which is so intelligible, familiar, and natural to me that in the course of my life I have constantly made combinations, in which the death both of animals and men has been accepted by me as a necessary and often as an agreeable condition of life? Where is here the terror?

There are only two strictly logical views of life: one, the false view, by which life is understood as those visible phenomena which take place in my body from birth to death, and the other, the true view, by which life is understood as that invisible consciousness of life which I bear in myself. One view is false, the other true, but both are logical, and men may have the one or the other, but with neither is the dread of death possible.

The first, the false view, which understands life as the visible phenomena in the body from birth until death, is as old as the world. It is not, as many think, a view of life which has been worked out by the materialistic science and philosophy of our time: the science and philosophy of our time have only carried this conception to its farthest limits, where it has become more obvious than ever that this view is not compatible with the fundamental demands of human nature; this is an old, primitive view of those people who stood on a lower level of development: it is expressed by the Chinese, by the Buddhists, by the Jews, in the book of Job, and in the expression, "Dust thou art, and to dust returnest."

This view, in its present expression, is as follows: life is an accidental play of forces in matter, as manifested in time and space. But that which we call our consciousness is not life: it is a certain deception of the sensations, which makes us believe that life consists in this consciousness. Consciousness is a spark which under certain conditions bursts into fire on the matter. This spark bursts into fire, flames up, goes out, and finally is no more. This spark, that is, consciousness, which is experienced by matter in the course of a definite period of time between two infinities, is nothing. And although consciousness sees itself and all the infinite world and all the play of accidents of this world, and, what is most important, in contradistinction to something not accidental, calls this game accidental, this consciousness is in itself nothing but the product of dead matter, a phantom, which rises and disappears without any residue or meaning. Everything is the product of endlessly changing matter, and what is called life is only a certain condition of dead matter.

Such is one view of life. This view is quite logical. According to this view, man's rational consciousness is only an accident which is concomitant with a certain condition of matter; and so that which in our consciousness we call life is a phantom. There exists nothing but what is dead. What we call life is the play of death. With such a view of life, it is not death that ought to be terrible, but life, as something unnatural and irrational, as is the case with the Buddhists and the modern pessimists, Schopenhauer and Hartmann.

The other view of life is as follows: life is only what I am conscious of in myself. Now, I do not cognize my life as that I was or shall be (thus I reflect on life), but as that I am, — never beginning anywhere and never ending anywhere. With the consciousness of my life the concept of time and space is not compatible. My life is manifested in time and space, but that is only its manifestation. Life itself, as cognized by me, is cognized by me outside time and space. Thus, with this view it turns out, on the contrary, that it is not the consciousness of life which is a phantom, but that everything spatial and temporal is phantasmal. Consequently, the temporal and spatial cessation of bodily existence has with this view nothing that is real, and so cannot cut off, nor even impair, my true life. With this view death does not exist.

Neither with the one view of life nor with the other could there be any dread of death, if men strictly adhered to one of these two views.

Neither as an animal nor as a rational being can man fear death: the animal, having no consciousness of life, does not see death, and a rational being, having the consciousness of life, cannot see in animal death anything but the natural, never ceasing motion of matter. But if man is afraid, he is not afraid of death, which he does not know, but of life, which alone his animal and his rational being know. The feeling which in men is expressed as the fear of death is only the consciousness of the inner contradiction of life, even as the dread of visions is only the consciousness of a diseased state of the mind.

"I shall cease to exist, — I shall die, and everything in which I take my life to be will die," one voice says to man. "I am," says another voice, "and cannot and must not die. I must not die, and yet I am dying."

Not in death but in this contradiction is the cause of all that terror which seizes man at the thought of carnal death: the dread of death does not consist in this, that a man is afraid of the cessation of the existence of his animal, but in this, that he supposes that that which cannot and must not die is dying. The thought of future death is only a transference into the future of death which is accomplished in the present. The phantom of the future carnal death is not an awakening of thought in regard to death, but, on the contrary, an awakening of thought in regard to the life which man ought to have, but has not. This feeling is similar to what a man must experience who awakens to life in the grave, underground. There is life, and I am in death, there it is, death! It appears to him that what is and ought to be is being destroyed. And the human mind is beside itself and terrified. The best proof that the terror of death is not the terror of death, but of the false life, is this, that people frequently kill themselves out of the terror of death.

Men are not terrified at the thought of the carnal death because they are afraid lest their life may end with it, but because the carnal death shows them clearly the necessity for the true life, which they have not. And for this reason people who do not understand life do not like to mention death. To think of death is for them the same as admitting that they do not live as the rational consciousness demands that they shall.

People who are afraid of death fear it, because it appears to them as emptiness and darkness; but they see emptiness and darkness, because they do not see life.

XXVIII.

THE CARNAL DEATH DESTROYS THE SPATIAL BODY AND THE TEMPORAL CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT CANNOT DESTROY WHAT FORMS THE FOUNDATION OF LIFE, — THE SPECIAL RELATION WHICH EACH BEING BEARS TO THE WORLD

But if the people who do not see life only came nearer to those visions which frighten them, and touched them, they would see that even for them the vision is only a vision, and not reality.

The dread of death is in men always due to the fact that they are afraid that with their carnal death they will lose their individual ego, which, they feel, constitutes their life. I shall die, the body will decompose, and my ego will be destroyed. My ego is that which has lived so many years in my body.

Men esteem this their ego, and, supposing that this ego coincides with their carnal life, they conclude that it must be destroyed with the destruction of the carnal life.

This is a very usual conclusion, and it rarely occurs to one to doubt it, and yet this conclusion is quite arbitrary. People, both those who regard themselves as materialists, and those who regard themselves as spiritualists, are so accustomed to the notion that their ego is that consciousness of their bodies which has lived so and so many years, that it even does not occur to them to verify the truth of such an assertion.

I have lived for fifty-nine years, and all this time I have been conscious of myself in my body, and this consciousness of myself by myself, it seems to me, has been my life. But that only seems so to me. I have not lived fifty-nine years, nor fifty-nine thousand years, nor fifty-nine seconds. Neither my body nor the time of its existence in any way determines the life of my ego. If at each minute of my life I shall ask myself what I am, I shall reply: something thinking and feeling, that is, something which bears its own peculiar relation to the world. Only this I recognize as my ego, and nothing else. I am positively not conscious of when and where I was born, when and where I began to feel and think as I am feeling and thinking now. All that my consciousness tells me is this: I am; I am with that relation of mine to the world in which I find myself now.

Of my birth, my childhood, my many periods of life, my adult years, of very recent times, I frequently do not remember anything. And if I do remember something, or I am reminded of something out of my past, I remember and recall these things like something told of others. How, then, on what ground, do I assert that during all the time of my existence I have been the same ego? I have certainly not had the same body: my body has all been matter, constantly flowing through something invisible and immaterial which recognizes this matter flowing through it as its body. My body has changed completely dozens of times; nothing old has remained: the muscles, the entrails, the bones, the brain — everything has changed.

My body is one only because there is something immaterial which recognizes all this changing body as one and its own. This immaterial something is what we call consciousness: it alone holds the body together and recognizes it as one and its own. Without this consciousness of self as apart from everything else, I should not know anything about my own nor about any other life. And so it would appear at first thought that the foundation of everything, consciousness, must be something constant.

During our whole life we have had repeated the phenomenon of sleep, which seems very simple to us because we all sleep every day, but which is positively incomprehensible if we admit, what we cannot help but admit, that during sleep consciousness is frequently interrupted.

Every twenty-four hours, during full sleep, consciousness comes to a sudden stop and is later renewed. And yet this consciousness is the only foundation which holds the whole body together and recognizes it as its own. It would seem that with the cessation of consciousness the body ought to fall to pieces and lose its entity; but this is not the case, either in natural or in artificial sleep.

But not only is the consciousness, which holds the whole body together, periodically disrupted, and the body does not fall to pieces, but this consciousness, in addition, changes as much as the body. As there is nothing in common between the matter of my present body and what it was ten years ago, as there has not been one body, so there has not been in me one consciousness. My consciousness when I was a child of three years of age and now are as different as the matter of my present body and that of my body thirty years ago. There is not one consciousness, but only a series of consecutive consciousnesses, which may be broken up to infinity.

Thus, the consciousness which holds the whole body together and recognizes it as its own is not a unit but something which is interrupted and transformed. There is not in man the one consciousness of self, as we generally imagine it to be in us, any more than there is one body. There is not in man one and the same body, nor that one something which separates this body from everything else, — there is not the consciousness of constantly one man, one during his whole life; but there is only a series of consecutive consciousnesses, which are held together by something, — and man still feels himself to be one.

Our body is not one; and that which recognizes this changeable body as one and our own is not continuous in time, but only a series of varying consciousnesses, and we have many times lost our body and these consciousnesses; we lose the body constantly and we lose consciousness every day, when we fall asleep, and every day and hour we feel in ourselves the changes of this consciousness, and are not in the least afraid of it. Consequently, if there is such an ego, which we are afraid we shall lose at death, this ego cannot be in the body which we call our own, or in the consciousness which we call our own at a given time, but in something different, which unites the whole series of consecutive consciousnesses into one.

What is this something which binds together my fundamental and individual ego, which is not composed of my body and of a series of consciousnesses which take place in it, but that fundamental ego on which, as on a wire, are strung, one after another, the various temporally consecutive consciousnesses? The question seems very profound and wise, and yet there is not a child that does not know an answer to it and does not utter this answer twenty times a day. "*I* love this, and *I* do not love that." These words are very simple, and yet in them lies the solution of the question as to what this special ego is which binds together all the consciousnesses. It is that ego which loves this and does not love that. Why a man loves this and does not love that, no one knows, and yet it is that which forms the basis of the life of each man; it is that which binds together all the temporally variant conditions of consciousness of each individual man. The external world acts on all men alike, but the impressions of men who are placed even under identical conditions are endlessly varied, both as to the number of impressions received and capable of infinite division, and as to their strength. Of these impressions the series of consecutive consciousnesses of each man is composed. But all these consecutive consciousnesses are bound together for the same reason that in the present some impressions act, and others do not act, on his consciousness. Now certain impressions act upon a man, or do not act upon him, because he loves this more or less, and does not love that.

Only in consequence of this greater or lesser degree of love there is formed in man a certain series of such or such impressions. Thus, it is nothing but the property of loving this more or less, and of not loving that, that is this special and fundamental ego of man, in which are collected all the scattered and interrupted consciousnesses. Though this property is developed during our life, it is brought by us into this life from some invisible and uncognizable past.

This special property of man to love one thing in a greater or lesser degree, and not to love another, is generally called character. By this word is frequently understood the peculiarity of the properties of every individual man, formed in consequence of certain conditions of time and place. But that is not correct. The fundamental property of man to love one thing more or less, and not to love another thing, is not due to spatial and temporal conditions, but, on the contrary, spatial and temporal conditions act upon a man, or do not act upon him, because a man, upon entering into the world, has already a very definite property of loving one thing and not loving another. This is the only reason why men who are born and brought up under precisely the same spatial and temporal conditions frequently present sharp contrasts as to their inner ego.

What unites all the scattered consciousnesses, which in their turn unite into one in our body, is something quite definite, though independent of spatial and temporal conditions, and is my real and actual ego. Myself I understand as this fundamental property; if I know any other men, I know them only as some special relations to the world. When we enter into serious spiritual communion with men, we are certainly not guided by their external signs, but try to penetrate into their essence, that is, to understand what their relation is to the world, what they love and to what extent, and what they do not love.

Every separate animal, a horse, a dog, a cow, if I know it and have a serious spiritual communion with it, is known to me not by external signs but by its special relation which it bears to the world, — that is, what, and to what extent, each of them loves, and what it does not love. If I know especial different breeds of animals, I know them, strictly speaking, not so much by external signs as by this, that each of them — a lion, a fish, a spider — represents a common special relation to the world. All lions in general like one thing, all fishes something else, and all spiders still something else; even because they all like something else they present themselves to my consciousness as different living beings.

The fact that I do not yet distinguish in each of these beings its special relation to the world does not prove that it does not exist, but only that this special relation to the world, which forms the life of one individual spider, is removed from that relation to the world in which I am, and that, therefore, I have not yet come to understand it, as Silvio Pellico understood his individual spider.

The foundation of everything which I know of myself and of the whole world is this special relation to the world in which I am and in consequence of which I see the other beings, which are in their special relation to the world. But my special relation to the world was not established in this life and did not begin with my body or with a series of temporally consecutive consciousnesses.

And so my body, which is united into one by my temporal consciousness, may be destroyed, and my temporal consciousness itself may be destroyed; but what cannot be destroyed is this special relation to the world which forms my special ego, from which everything which is was built up. It cannot be destroyed, because it is that which alone is. If it did not exist, I should not know the series of my consecutive consciousnesses, nor my body, nor my life, nor any other life. And so the destruction of the body and of consciousness cannot serve as a sign of the destruction of my special relation to the world, which did not have a beginning or origin in this life.

XXIX.

THE TERROR OF DEATH IS DUE TO THIS, THAT MEN REGARD AS THEIR LIFE ONE SMALL PART OF IT, WHICH IS LIMITED BY THEIR OWN FALSE CONCEPTION OF IT

We are afraid that with our carnal death we lose our special ego, which unites into one both the body and the series of consciousnesses as manifested in time; but this special ego did not begin with my birth, and so the interruption of a certain temporal consciousness cannot destroy that which unites into one all the temporal consciousnesses.

The carnal death, indeed, destroys what holds the body together, — the consciousness of the temporal life. But this takes place with us all the time, every day, whenever we fall asleep. The question is as to whether the carnal death destroys what unites all the consecutive consciousnesses into one, that is, my special relation to the world. In order that we may affirm this, we must first prove that this special relation to the world, which unites into one all the consecutive consciousnesses, was born with my carnal existence, and so will die with it. But this is not true.

Judging on the basis of my consciousness, I see that that which has united all my consciousnesses into one, — a certain susceptibility for one thing and coldness for another, in consequence of which one thing remains in me and another disappears, the degree of my love of the good and hatred of the evil, — that this my special relation to the world, which forms me, my individual me, is not the product of some external cause, but the fundamental cause of all the remaining phenomena of my life.

But judging on the basis of observation, it appears to me at first that the causes of the peculiarity of my ego lie in the peculiarities of my parents and of the conditions which have acted upon me and upon them; but, continuing to reason on this path, I cannot help but see that if my special ego lies in the peculiarity of my parents and of the conditions which have acted upon them, it lies also in the peculiarity of all my ancestors and in the conditions of their existence — *ad infinitum*, that is, they are outside time and space, so that my special ego originated outside of space and outside of time, that is, precisely what I am conscious of.

In this, and only in this extra-temporal and extra-spatial basis of my special relation to the world, which unites all my remembered consciousnesses and the consciousnesses which preceded my remembered life (as Plato says and as we all feel), — in this, in this basis, in my special relation to the world, lies this special ego which we are afraid will be destroyed with the carnal death.

But we need only understand that what unites all the consciousnesses into one, what is man's special ego, is outside of time and has always been, and that what can be interrupted is only a series of consciousnesses of a certain time, in order that it may be clear that the destruction of the consciousness last in time, at the carnal death, can as little interrupt the true human ego as the daily sleep. Not one man is afraid of falling asleep, though in sleep the same takes place as at death, namely, consciousness in time is interrupted. Man is not afraid of falling asleep, though the destruction of consciousness is precisely the same as at death, not because he has come to the conclusion that he has fallen asleep and awakened again before, and so will waken even now (this reflection is not correct: he may have wakened a thousand times, and not waken the thousand and first time), — no one ever makes this reflection, and it would not calm him; but man knows that his true ego lives outside of time, and that, therefore, the interruption of his consciousness, as manifested in time, cannot impair his life.

If a man fell asleep, as in the fairy tales, for a thousand years, he would fall asleep just as calmly as when he falls asleep for two hours. For the consciousness of the non-temporal, true life a million years of interruption or eight hours are the same, for time does not exist for such a life.

When the body is destroyed, the consciousness of the present day will be destroyed.

It is time that man became accustomed to the transformation of his body and the exchange of one series of temporal consciousnesses for another. These changes began as far back as man can remember himself, and they have taken place without cessation. Man is not afraid of the changes of his body, and not only is not terrified, but very frequently desires an acceleration of these changes, — desires to grow, to arrive at man's estate, to be cured. Man was a red piece of flesh, and all his consciousness consisted in the demands of his stomach: now he is a bearded, sensible man, or a woman who loves grown-up children. There is nothing in the body or in the consciousness like what it was, and man is not frightened at these changes which have brought him to the present condition, but hails them with joy. Where, then, is the terror in the imminent change? The destruction? But that on which all these changes take place, — the special relation to the world, — that in which the consciousness of the true life consists, did not begin with the birth of the body, but outside of the body and outside of time. How, then, can any temporal and spatial change destroy what is outside of it? Man arrests his attention on a small, tiny part of his life, does not want to see the whole of it, and trembles lest this tiny and beloved particle disappear from view. This reminds me of the anecdote of that madman who imagined that he was made of glass and when he was dropped said, "Crash!" and immediately died. In order that man may have life, he must take all of it, and not a small part of it as manifested in time and space. To him who takes the whole of life, it shall be given, but from him who takes part of it, even that which he has will be taken from him.

XXX.

LIFE IS A RELATION TO THE WORLD. THE MOTION OF LIFE IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW, HIGHER RELATION, AND SO DEATH IS THE ENTRANCE INTO A NEW RELATION

Life we cannot understand otherwise than as a certain relation to the world: thus we understand life in ourselves and thus we understand it also in other beings.

But in ourselves we understand life not only as a once established relation to the world, but also as the establishment of a new relation to the world through a greater and ever greater subjection of the animal personality to reason, and as a manifestation of a greater degree of love. That inevitable destruction of the carnal existence which we see in ourselves, shows us that the relation in which we are toward the world is not constant, and that we are obliged to establish another relation. The establishment of this new relation, that is, the motion of life, destroys the conception of death. Death appears only to him who, not having recognized his life as consisting in the establishment of a rational relation to the world and to its manifestation in a greater and ever greater love, has stopped at that relation, that is, at that degree of love for one and enmity toward another with which he entered into existence.

Life is an unceasing motion, but, by persisting in the same relation to the world, persisting in that degree of love with which he entered into the world, he feels its arrest, and death appears to him.

Death is visible and terrible only to such a man. The whole existence of such a man is one unceasing death. Death is visible and terrible to him, not only in the future, but also in the present, with all the manifestations of the diminution of the animal life, from childhood to old age, for the motion of existence from childhood to maturity only seems to be a temporary increase of forces, but is in reality just such an induration of the members, diminution of pliability and vitality, as do not cease from birth until death. Such a man continually sees death before him, and nothing can save him from it. With every day and hour the position of such a man becomes worse and worse, and nothing can improve it. His special relation to the world, his love for one and enmity toward another, presents itself to such a man as one of the conditions of his existence, and the one business of life, the establishment of a new relation to the world, the increase of love, presents itself to him as unnecessary. His whole life passes in the impossible, — in the attempt at liberating himself from the inevitable diminution of life, in its induration, weakening, aging, and death.

But not so for a man who understands life. Such a man knows that he has brought into his present life his special relation to the world, his love for one and enmity toward another from the past which is concealed from him. He knows that this his love for one and enmity toward another which is carried by him into his existence, is the very essence of his life; that it is not an accidental property of his life, but that this alone has the motion of life, — and he places his life in this motion alone, in the increase of love.

Looking at his past in this life, he sees, by the series of cognitions which is intelligible to him, that his relation to the world has changed, the subjection to the law of reason has increased and the power and sphere of love has increased all the time, without cessation, giving him an ever increasing good independently of, and sometimes directly in inverse proportion to, the existence of personality.

Such a man, who accepts his life from the invisible past, and recognizes its constant uninterrupted growth, endures it and looks into the future, not only calmly, but even with joy.

They say that disease, old age, debility, dotage are the destruction of man's consciousness and life. For what man? I imagine John the Divine falling, according to the tradition, from old age into childhood. According to the tradition he says nothing but this: "Brethren, love one another!" The barely moving old man of one hundred years, with tearful eyes, lisps only these three words, "Love one another!" In such a man the animal existence is barely flickering, — it is all consumed by the new relation to the world, the new living being, which no longer finds its place in the existence of the carnal man.

For a man who understands life as it actually is to speak of the diminution of his life with diseases and old age, and to grieve about it, is the same as though a man on approaching the light should grieve about the diminution of his shadow, in proportion as he walks up to the light. To believe in the destruction of one's life, because the body is destroyed, is the same as believing that the destruction of the shadow of an object, when this object has entered into the full light, is a sure sign that the object itself is annihilated. Such a conclusion could be made only by a man who has looked for so long a time into the shadow that at last he comes to imagine that the shadow is the object itself.

But to a man who knows himself, not from the reflection in his spatial and temporal existence, but from his increased love relation to the world, the destruction of the shadow of his spatial and temporal relations is only a sign of a greater degree of light. For a man who understands his life as a certain special relation to the world, with which he entered into existence, and which grew in his life with the increase of love, to believe in his annihilation is the same as though a man who knows the external visible laws of the world should believe that his mother found him under a cabbage-leaf, and that his body will suddenly fly away somewhere, so that nothing will be left.

XXXI.

THE LIFE OF DEAD PEOPLE DOES NOT CEASE IN THIS WORLD

AND still more, I shall not say on the other hand, but according to the very essence of life, as we cognize it, does the superstition of death become clear to us. My friend, my brother lived just as I do, and now he has stopped living like me. His life was his consciousness and took place under the conditions of his bodily existence; consequently, there is no place and no time for the manifestation of his consciousness, and there is none for me. My brother was, I was in communion with him, and now he is not, and I shall never find out where he is.

"Between him and us all ties are broken. He does not exist for us and we similarly will not exist for those who will be left. What, then, is this, if not death?" Thus speak people who do not understand life.

These people see in the cessation of the external communion an unquestionable proof of actual death, whereas by nothing is the phantasmal conception of death more clearly and more obviously dispersed than by the cessation of the carnal existence of our friends. My brother has died, what has happened? Namely this, that the manifestation of his relation to the world, accessible to my observation in time and space, has disappeared from my eyes, and nothing is left.

"Nothing is left," so would a chrysalis say which has not yet unfolded itself as a butterfly, as it observes that the cocoon which is lying near it is empty. But the chrysalis would say so if it could think and speak, because, having lost its neighbour, it would indeed feel the neighbour as being nothing. Not so with man. My brother has died: his cocoon, it is true, is empty, — I do not see him in the form in which I saw him heretofore, but his disappearance from my sight has not destroyed my relation to him. With me is left, as we say, his memory.

His memory is left, — not the remembrance of his face, his eyes, but the remembrance of his spiritual picture.

What is this memory, — such a simply and apparently intelligible word? The forms of crystals, of animals disappear, and there is no memory left among crystals and animals. But I preserve the memory of my friend and brother. And this memory is the more vivid the more the life of my friend and brother harmonized with the law of reason, the more it was manifested in love. This memory is not merely a notion, but something which acts upon me in precisely the same way as my brother's life acted upon me during his earthly existence. This memory is the same invisible, immaterial atmosphere which surrounded his life and acted upon me and upon others during his carnal existence, even as it acts upon me after his death. This memory demands of me after his death the same that it demanded of me during his lifetime. More than this: this memory becomes for me more obligatory after his death than it was during his life. That life force which was in my brother has not only not disappeared, or been diminished, but has not even remained the same, for it has increased, and acts more powerfully upon me than before.

His life force after his carnal death acts as much or even more strongly than before his death, and it acts like everything which is truly alive. On what ground, then, feeling upon myself this life force just as it was during the carnal existence of my brother, that is, as his relation to the world, which elucidated to me my relation to the world, can I affirm that my dead brother has no longer any life? I can say that he has gone out of that lower relation to the world, in which he was as an animal, and in which I still abide, — that is all; I can say that I do not see that centre of the new relation to the world in which he now is: but I cannot deny his life, because I feel its force upon myself. I have been looking at a reflecting surface to see how a man was holding me; the reflecting surface has grown dim. I no longer see how he is holding me, but I feel with my whole being that he is holding me as much as before, and so exists.

But, moreover, this invisible life of my dead brother not only acts upon me, but enters into me. His special living ego, his relation to the world, becomes my relation to the world. It is as though in the establishment of the relation to the world he raised me to that level to which he himself rose, and to me, to my especial living ego, is made clearer that next step to which he raised himself, disappearing from my vision, but drawing me after him. Thus I cognize the life of my brother who sleeps in carnal death, and so I cannot doubt it; but, as I observe the actions of this life, which has vanished from my vision upon the world, I become still more indubitably convinced of the actuality of this life which has vanished from my vision. The man is dead, but his relation to the world continues to act upon people, not as in his lifetime, but with an enormously greater force, and this action increases in accordance with its reasonableness and lovableness, and grows like everything which lives, never ceasing and knowing no interruptions.

Christ has been dead a very long time, and his carnal existence was short, and we have no clear conception of his carnal personality, but the force of his rational and lovable life, his relation to the world — nobody else's —

acts even now upon millions of people, who receive in themselves his relation to the world and live by it. What is it, then, that acts? What is this which before was connected with the carnal existence of Christ and now forms the continuation and ramification of that his life? We say that it is not Christ's life, but its consequences. When we utter such absolutely meaningless words we imagine that we have said something more definite and clear than that this force is the living Christ itself. The same might be said by ants who dug around an acorn, which sprouted and grew to be an oak; the acorn gave way to the oak, which now tears up the ground with its roots, drops leaves, branches, and new acorns, wards off the light and the rain, and changes everything which lived round about it. "This is not the life of the acorn," the ants say, "but the consequences of its life, which came to an end when we dragged that acorn down and threw it into the hole."

My brother died yesterday or a thousand years ago, and that same force of his life which acted during his carnal existence continues to act more powerfully in me and in hundreds, thousands, millions of men, in spite of the fact that the visible centre of this force of his temporal carnal existence has disappeared from my sight. What does this mean? I saw before me the light of the burning grass. The grass has burned out, but the light is only stronger: I do not see the cause of this light, I do not know that anything is burning, but I can conclude that the same fire which burned the grass is now burning the distant forest, or something else that I cannot see. The light is such that I not only see it now, but it alone guides me and gives me life. I live by this light. How can I deny it? I may think that the force of this life has now a different centre, which is invisible to me; but I cannot deny it, because I feel it, am moved and live by it. I cannot know what this centre is, what this life is in itself, — I can guess, if I am fond of guessing and am not afraid of blundering. But if I seek a rational comprehension of life, I shall be satisfied only with what is clear and indubitable, and will not spoil that which is clear and indubitable by adding to it obscure and arbitrary guesses. It is enough for me to know that everything I live by is composed of the lives of those who have lived before me and have now been long dead, and that, therefore, every man who has fulfilled the law of life and has subjected his animal personality to reason and has manifested the power of love, has lived and still lives in others after the disappearance of his carnal existence, in order that the insipid and terrible superstition of death should no longer trouble me.

In the men who have left after them the force which continues to be active we may observe also this, why they, who subjected their personality to reason and abandoned themselves to a life of love, never could have had any doubts about the possibility of the destruction of life.

In the lives of such men we can find the foundation of their faith in the uninterruptedness of life; and then, comprehending our own life, we may find these foundations in ourselves as well. Christ said that he would live after the disappearance of the phantasm of life. He said this, because even then, during his carnal existence, he entered into the true life, which cannot cease. Even during his carnal existence he lived in the beams of the light from that other centre of life, toward which he was walking, and saw in his lifetime that the beams of that light were illuminating the people round about him. The same is seen by every man who renounces his personality and lives a rational life of love.

No matter how narrow the circle of a man's activity may be, — whether he is Christ, or Socrates, or a good, inglorious, self-sacrificing old man, or youth, or woman, — if he lives, renouncing his personality for the good of others, he enters even here, in this life, into that new relation to the world, for which there is no death, and the establishment of which is for all men the work of this life.

A man who places his life in the subjection to the law of reason and in the manifestation of love sees even in this life, on the one hand, the beams of light of that new centre of life toward which he is walking, and, on the other, that action which this light, passing through it, produces on those who surround him. And this gives him an indubitable faith in the undiminishableness, undyingness, and eternal intensification of life. We cannot accept the belief of immortality from others, — we cannot convince ourselves of immortality. In order that there should be a belief in immortality, there has to be this immortality, and in order that it should be, we must understand our life as being immortal. Only he can believe in the future life, who has done his work of life, who has established in this life that new relation to the world, which is no longer contained in him.

XXXII.

THE SUPERSTITION OF DEATH IS DUE TO THIS, THAT MAN CONFUSES HIS DIFFERENT RELATIONS TO THE WORLD

YES, if we look upon life in its real meaning, it becomes difficult even to understand on what the strange superstition of death is based.

Thus, if you make out what it is that in the darkness frightened you as a phantasm, you can no longer reconstruct that phantasmal terror.

The fear of losing what alone exists is due to this alone, that life presents itself to man, not only in the one, to him known, but invisible, special relation of his rational consciousness to the world, but also in two, to him unknown, but visible relations: his animal relation and the relation of his body to the world. Everything in existence presents itself to man: (1) as the relation of his rational consciousness to the world, (2) as the relation of his animal consciousness to the world, and (3) as the relation of the matter of his body to the world. Failing to understand that the relation of his rational consciousness to the world is his only life, man imagines his life also in the visible relation of his animal consciousness and matter to the world, and is afraid of losing his special relation of the rational consciousness to the world, when in his personality there is impaired the former relation of his animal personality and of the matter composing him to the world.

To such a man it appears that he originates from the motion of matter, passing to the level of personal animal consciousness. It seems to him that this animal consciousness passes into a rational consciousness, and that later this rational consciousness weakens, again passes back into the animal, and at last the animal weakens and passes into dead matter, from which it came. But the relation of his rational consciousness to the world presents itself in this view as something accidental, unnecessary, and perishable. With this view it turns out that the relation of his animal consciousness to the world cannot be destroyed, — the animal continues itself in its species; the relation of matter to the world can in no way be destroyed, and is eternal; but the most precious, — his rational consciousness, — is not only not eternal, but is only the gleam of something unnecessary, something superfluous.

And man feels that that cannot be. And in this lies the terror of death. In order to save themselves from this fear, some people want to assure themselves that the animal consciousness is their rational consciousness, and that the undyingness of the animal man, that is, of his species, his descent, satisfies that demand for the immortality of the rational consciousness which they contain in themselves. Others want to assure themselves that the life, which has never existed before, having suddenly appeared in the carnal form and having vanished again from it, will again be raised in the flesh and live. But it is impossible for people who do not recognize life in the relation of the rational consciousness to the world to believe either the one or the other. It is evident to them that the continuation of the human race does not satisfy the unceasing demand for the eternity of their special ego; but the conception of a life beginning anew includes the concept of a cessation of life, and if life did not exist before, nor always, it cannot exist later.

For either of these the earthly life is a wave. Out of the dead matter rises the personality, out of the personality the rational consciousness, — the crest of the wave; having risen to the crest, the wave, the rational consciousness and the personality, falls back to whence it came, and is destroyed. To either of these human life is the visible life. Man grows up, matures, and dies, and after death there can be nothing for him; what is left after him and of him, whether his posterity, or even his works, cannot satisfy him. He is sorry for *himself*, is afraid of the cessation of *his* life. He cannot believe that this life of his, which has begun here upon earth in his body and ends here, should rise again. He knows that if he did not exist before, and has appeared out of nothing and dies, his special ego will and can never exist again. Man is cognizant of this, that he will not die only when he will cognize that he was never born and has always existed and will always exist. Man will believe in his immortality only when he will understand that his life is not a wave, but that eternal motion which in this life is manifested only as a wave.

It seems to me that I shall die and my life will come to an end, and this thought torments and frightens me, for I am sorry for myself. What will die? What am I sorry for? What am I from the commonest point of view? First of all I am flesh. Well, am I afraid and sorry for it? It turns out that I am not: the body, matter, can never, nowhere perish, — not one particle of it. Consequently this part of me is safe, and there is no reason for having any fears for it. Everything will be intact. But no, they say, it is not this that one is sorry for. I am sorry for myself, Lev Nikoláevich, Iván Seménych. But a man is not what he was twenty years ago, and every day he is different. So for whom am I sorry? No, they say, it is not this that one is sorry for. What I am sorry for is the consciousness of myself, of my ego.

But this consciousness of yours was not always one, but there were different states of consciousness: there was one a year ago, and a quite different one before that; as far as you remember, it has changed all the time. Have you taken such a special liking for your present consciousness that you are sorry to lose it? If it were always one with you, this would be intelligible; but it has been doing nothing but changing all the time. You do not see its beginning, and you cannot find it, and suddenly you want that there should be no end to it, that the consciousness which is in you should remain for ever. As far back as you can remember yourself, you have been going. You came into the world yourself not knowing how; but you know that you came as that special ego that you are; then you walked and walked, until you reached the middle, and suddenly you were both rejoiced and frightened, and you are stubborn, and will not move from the spot, to move on, because you do not see what is there. But you have not seen even the place from which you have come, and you certainly came; you came in by the entrance gate, and you do not want to go out by the exit.

Your whole life has been a walking through the carnal existence: you walked and were in a hurry to walk, and suddenly you feel sorry because that is taking place which you have been desiring all the time. What you are terrified by is the great change of your state at the carnal death; but such a great change took place at your birth, and that not only did not result in anything bad for you, but, on the contrary, it resulted in something good, for you do not wish to part from it.

What is it that can frighten you? You say that you are sorry for your ego, with your present sensations and thoughts, with your view of the world, with your present relation to the world.

You are afraid you will lose your relation to the world. What is this relation? What does it consist in?

If it consists in this, that you eat, drink, beget, build, dress yourself in a certain way, and assume a certain relation to men and animals, all that is the relation of every man, as a reasoning animal, to life, and this relation can never pass away; there have been millions such, and there will be millions, and their species will as certainly be preserved as each particle of matter. The preservation of the species is implanted in all animals with such force, and, therefore, is so firmly grounded that there is no need of having any fears on that score. If you are an animal, you have no reason for fearing; but if you are matter, you are still better secured in your eternity.

But if you are afraid of losing what is not animal, you are afraid of losing your special rational relation to the world, — with which you have entered into this existence. But you know that it did not arise with your birth: it exists independently of your procreated animal, and so it cannot depend on its death.

XXXIII.

THE VISIBLE LIFE IS A PART OF THE INFINITE MOTION OF LIFE

My earthly life and the life of all other men presents itself to me like this:

I and every living man, — we find ourselves in this world in a certain definite relation to the world, with a certain degree of love. At first it seems to us that our life begins with this relation to the world, but observations over ourselves and over other men show us that this relation to the world, the degree of love of each one of us, did not begin with this life, but has been carried by us into life from the past, which is concealed from us by our carnal birth; besides, we see that the whole current of our life here is nothing but an unceasing increase and intensification of our love, which never ceases, but is only concealed from our view by our carnal death.

My visible life presents itself to me as a segment of a cone, the apex and base of which are hidden from my mental vision. The narrowest part of the cone is that relation of mine to the world with which I first become conscious of myself; the broadest part is that higher relation to life which I have now attained. The beginning of this cone, its apex, is hidden from me in time by my birth; the continuation is hidden from me in the future, which is equally unknown to me in my carnal existence and in my carnal death. I do not see the apex of the cone, nor its base, but from the part through which my visible, memorable life passes, I unquestionably know its properties.

At first it seems to me that this segment of the cone is my whole life, but in proportion as my true life advances, I see, on the one hand, that that which forms the foundation of my life is behind it, beyond its borders: in proportion with life I feel more clearly and more vividly my connection with my visible past; on the other hand, I see that this foundation leans against the future, which is unknown to me, and I feel more clearly and more vividly my connection with the future, and I conclude that my visible life, my earthly life, is only a small part of my whole life, which incontestably exists at both ends, — before birth and after death, — but which is hidden from my present consciousness. And so the cessation of the visibility of life after the carnal death, just like its invisibility before birth, does not deprive me of the undoubted knowledge of its existence before birth and after death.

I enter into life with certain ready properties of love to the world outside of me; my carnal existence — whether it be short or long — passes in the increase of this love which I brought with me into the world, and so I conclude indubitably that I lived before my birth and shall live, as after that moment of the present in which I, reflecting, now am, so also after any other moment of time before and after my carnal death. Looking outside of me at the carnal beginnings and ends of the existence of other men (even of beings in general), I see that one life seems to be longer, another shorter; one appears before, and is visible to me for a longer time; another appears later, and very quickly is again concealed from me; but in all of them I see the manifestation of one and the same law of every true life, — an increase of love, — so to speak, a broadening of the beams of life. Sooner or later the curtain will fall which conceals from me the temporal current of the life of men: the life of men is still a life exactly the same as any other, and it has no beginning and no end. The fact that a man has lived a longer or shorter time in the visible conditions of this existence can present no distinctions in his true life. The fact that one man passed more slowly through the field of vision open to me, or that another man passed through it more quickly, can by no means compel me to ascribe more actual life to the one and less to the other. I know without a doubt that, if I saw a man walking past my window, — whether he walked fast or slowly, — this man existed before the time when I saw him, and will continue to exist, even though he is hidden from my view.

But why do some pass quickly, and others slowly? Why does a man live, who is old, dried up, morally ossified, and, in our opinion, incapable of performing the law of life, — of increasing love, — while a child, a youth, a girl, a man in the full vigour of his spiritual labour dies, passes out of the conditions of this carnal life, in which, according to our conception, he has only begun to establish in himself a regular relation to life?

We may understand the death of Pascal, of Goethe; but Chénier, Lérmontov, and thousands of other men, with whom the inner work, as we think, had just begun, whose work, as we think, might have been so well accomplished here?

But that only seems so to us. None of us knows anything about those principles of life which are brought into the world by others, about that motion of life which has taken place in it, about those obstacles against the motion of life, which are to be found in this existence, and, above all, about those other conditions of life, possible, but invisible to us, in the which the life of this or that man may be placed in the other existence.

It seems to us, as we look at the blacksmith's work, that the horseshoe is all made, — that he has to strike it but once or twice, — but he breaks it up and throws it into the fire, knowing that it has been overheated.

We cannot know whether the work of the true life has been accomplished in man or not. We know this only of ourselves. It seems to us that a man dies when he does not need to, but this cannot be. A man dies only when death is needed for his good, just as a man grows up and reaches man's estate only when that is needed for his good.

Indeed, if by life we understand life, and not the semblance of it; if the true life is the foundation of everything, the foundation cannot depend on what it produces: the cause cannot result from the result, — the current of the true life cannot be impaired by its change, by its manifestation. The incepted and unfinished motion of man's life cannot cease in this world, because he gets a boil, or a bacterium flies into him, or somebody discharges a pistol at him.

A man dies only because in this world the good of his true life can no longer be increased, and not because his lungs hurt, or because he has a cancer, or because he was shot, or a bomb was thrown at him. It generally seems to us that it is natural to live a carnal life, and unnatural to perish by fire, water, cold, lightning, diseases, pistol-shots, or a bomb, — but we need only think seriously, looking at men's lives from the side, in order that we may see that, on the contrary, it is very unnatural for a man to live a carnal life among these destructive conditions, among these universally distributed and generally fatal bacteria. It is natural for him to perish. And so the carnal life among these disastrous conditions is, on the contrary, something very unnatural in the material sense. If we live, this is not due to the fact that we are taking care of ourselves, but because in us is taking place the work of life which subjects to itself all these conditions. We live, not because we take care of ourselves, but because we are doing the work of life. When the work of life is done, and nothing can arrest the unceasing destruction of the human animal life, this destruction takes place, and one of the nearest causes of the carnal life, which always surround us, appears to us as its exclusive cause.

Our true life exists, — it alone we know, from it alone we know our animal life, — and so, if its semblance is subject to invariable laws, how can that which produces this semblance fail to be subject to laws?

But what troubles us is that we do not see the causes and actions of our true life in the same way as we see the causes and actions in external phenomena: we do not know why one enters into life with such properties of his ego, and another with other properties, — why one man's life is cut short, and another man's life is continued. We ask ourselves: what were the causes before my existence that I was born to be what I am? And what will be after my death as the result of my living in one way or another? And we regret that we do not receive any answers to these questions.

But to regret this, that I am unable to find out now what happened before my life and what will be after my death, is the same as regretting my inability to see what is beyond the limits of my vision. If I could see what is beyond the limits of my vision, I should not be able to see what is within these limits; but, for the good of my animal, I must above all else see what is around me.

The same is true of my reason, by means of which I cognize. If I could see what is beyond the limits of my reason, I should not see what is within its limits; but, for the good of true life, I must above all else know that to which I am obliged now and here to submit my animal personality, in order that I may obtain the good of life.

And reason reveals this to me: it reveals to me in this life that one path on which I do not see the cessation of my good.

It shows without a doubt that this life did not begin with birth, but has always been, — it shows that the good of this life grows, increases here, reaching those limits which can no longer contain it, and only then passes out of those conditions which retard its growth, in order to pass into another existence.

Reason places man on that one path of life which, like a cone-shaped, widening tunnel, amidst the walls which surround it on all sides, opens to it in the distance the unquestionable endlessness of life and of its good.

XXXIV.

THE INEXPLICABILITY OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE EARTHLY EXISTENCE PROVES MORE CONVINCINGLY THAN ANYTHING ELSE TO MAN THAT HIS LIFE IS NOT A LIFE OF THE PERSONALITY, WHICH BEGAN WITH BIRTH AND ENDS WITH DEATH

But even if man could get along without fearing death or thinking of it, the terrible, aimless sufferings, which cannot be justified and which can never be averted, the sufferings to which he is subject, would suffice to destroy every rational meaning which is ascribed to life.

I am occupied with a good, unquestionably useful work, and suddenly I am seized by a disease which cuts short my work and torments and pesters me without sense or purpose. A screw has rusted in the rails, and it must happen so that on the day when it comes out, a good woman, a mother, is travelling on that train, in that particular car, and her children are killed in her sight. An earthquake causes the particular spot on which Lisbon or Vyérny stands to cave in, and absolutely innocent people are buried alive in the ground and die in terrible suffering. What sense has this? Why, for what purpose are these and thousands of similar senseless, terrible accidents of sufferings which afflict people?

The explanations of reason explain nothing. The explanations of reason of all such phenomena always get around the very essence of the question and show more convincingly its insolubility. I have fallen sick, because some kinds of microbes have settled somewhere in me;

or the children were crushed to death by the train in their mother's sight, because the dampness affects the iron in such and such a way; or Vyérny caved in, because there exist certain geological laws. But the question is, why such or such people were subject to these terrible sufferings, and how I can free myself from these accidents of suffering?

There is no answer to this. Reflection, on the contrary, shows me that there is no law by which one man is subject to these casualties and another is not, and that there can be no such law; that there is an endless number of such casualties, and that, therefore, no matter what I may do, my life is every second subject to all the infinite accidents of most terrible suffering.

If men made only the deductions which inevitably follow from their world conception, these people, if they understand life as personal existence, would not remain alive a minute. Certainly not a labourer would work for a master who, hiring him, would reserve for himself the right every time when he pleased to roast the labourer over a slow fire, or to flay him alive, or to pull out his nerves, or do in general all those terrible things which, without any explanation or cause, he did with his labourers in full sight of him whom he was hiring. If men actually understood life fully as they say that they understand it, not one of them would, out of fear of all those painful and absolutely inexplicable sufferings, which he sees all around him, and to which he may be subject at any moment, remain alive in the world.

But although all people know different easy means for killing themselves and passing out of this life, which is so full of cruel and senseless sufferings, they continue to live: they complain of the sufferings and lament them, but continue to live.

It is impossible to say that this is due to the fact that there are more pleasures in life than sufferings, because, in the first place, not only a simple reflection, but also a philosophic investigation of life shows that the whole earthly life is a series of sufferings, which are by no means redeemed by the pleasures; in the second place, we know from ourselves and from others that people in positions which offer them nothing but a series of increasing sufferings without the possibility of alleviating them until death, none the less do not kill themselves and hold on to life.

There is but one explanation to this strange contradiction: all men know in the depth of their hearts that all kinds of suffering are necessary for the good of their life, and so continue to live, foreseeing them or submitting to them. They are provoked at these sufferings, because with the false view of life, which demands the good only for its personality, the impairment of this good, which does not lead to any palpable good, must present itself to them as something inexplicable and so provoking.

Men are terrified at these sufferings and marvel at them as at something quite unexpected and unintelligible. And yet every man has grown up with sufferings and his whole life is a series of sufferings, experienced by him and imposed by him on other beings, and it would seem that it is time to get used to sufferings, not to be terrified by them, and not to ask oneself why and for what these sufferings exist. If a man will only stop to think, he will see that all his pleasures are bought with the sufferings of other beings; that all his sufferings are necessary for his enjoyment; that without sufferings there are no pleasures; that sufferings and pleasures are two opposite conditions which are evoked one by the other and are necessary one for the other. So what do the questions mean, "Why? For what are these sufferings?" which a rational man puts to himself? Why does a man who knows that suffering is united with enjoyment ask himself why and for what there is suffering, and not why and for what there are pleasures?

The whole life of an animal and of man, as an animal, is an uninterrupted chain of sufferings. The whole activity of an animal and of a man, as an animal, is called forth only by suffering. Suffering is a morbid sensation which rouses an activity that abolishes this morbid sensation, and which evokes a state of enjoyment. And the life of an animal and of man, as an animal, is not only not impaired by suffering, but takes place only in consequence of suffering. Suffering is, therefore, what moves life, and so is what it ought to be; so what, then, does man mean by asking why and for what there is suffering?

An animal does not ask that.

When a hungry perch torments a minnow, or a spider a fly, a wolf a sheep, they know that they do what must be; and so, when a perch, a spider, a wolf, are subjected to similar torments by those who are stronger than they, they, in running away, defending themselves, and escaping, know that they are doing everything which ought to be done, and so there cannot be the slightest doubt in them that what is taking place with them is as it ought to be. But a man who is troubling himself only about having his legs healed over that were torn off on the field of battle, where he tore off the legs of other men; or who is thinking only of how he may, in the best way possible, pass his time in the solitary confinement of the prison after he has directly or indirectly incarcerated others there; or who is thinking only of how he may ward off and escape the wolves, which are tearing him to pieces, after he has himself cut up and devoured thousands of animals, — such a man cannot find that what is taking place with him is right. He cannot acknowledge that what is happening to him is right, because, when he was subject to these sufferings, he did not do everything which he ought to have done. But, since he did not do everything which he ought to have done, it seems to him that what is happening to him is not right.

But what is it that a man who is being torn by wolves ought to do except to run away and defend himself? He ought to do what is proper for a rational being: to recognize the sin which has produced the suffering, by repenting it, and to recognize the truth.

The animal suffers only in the present, and so the activity which is evoked by its suffering and is directed upon itself in the present completely satisfies it. But man suffers not in the present alone, but also in the past and in the future, and so the activity which is evoked by his sufferings cannot satisfy him, if it is directed only upon the present of the human animal. Nothing but an activity which is directed upon the cause and the consequences of the suffering, upon the past and the future, satisfies a suffering man.

The animal is locked up and tries to get out of its cage, or its leg is broken and it licks the aching spot, or it is being devoured by another and tries to get away from it. The law of its life is impaired from without, and it directs its activity to its reëstablishment, and there takes place what ought to take place. But man — I myself or a near friend of mine — is sitting in prison; I have lost my leg in battle, or wolves are tearing me to pieces; the activity which is directed to the flight from prison, to the healing of the leg, to defending myself against the wolves, does not satisfy me, because the imprisonment, the pain in my leg, the lacerating of the wolves, form only a tiny part of my suffering. I see the causes of my suffering in the past, in my own errors and in those of others, and if my activity is not directed to the cause of suffering, to the error, and I do not try to free myself from it, I am not doing what I ought to do, and so the suffering presents itself to me as what ought not to be, and it grows, not only in reality, but also in imagination, to terrible proportions, which exclude the possibility of life.

The cause of the suffering is for the animal, the violation of the law of the animal life: this violation is manifested in the consciousness of the pain, and the activity which is evoked by the violation of the law is directed to the removal of the pain; for the rational consciousness the cause of the suffering is the violation of the law of the life of the rational consciousness: this violation is manifested in the consciousness of error, of sin, and the activity which is evoked by the violation of the law is directed to the removal of the error, the sin. And as the suffering of the animal evokes an activity which is directed upon the pain, and this activity frees the suffering from its agony, so the sufferings of the rational being evoke an activity which is directed upon the error, and this activity frees the suffering from its agony.

The questions as to why and what for, which rise in a man's soul when he experiences or thinks of suffering, show only that he does not yet know the activity which ought to be evoked in him by the suffering, and which frees the suffering from its agony. Indeed, for a man who recognizes his life in the animal existence, there cannot be this activity which frees from suffering, and the less of it, the narrower the sense in which he understands his life.

When a man, who recognizes his personal existence as life, finds the causes of his personal suffering in his personal error, — when he understands that he grew ill because he ate something harmful, or that he was beaten because he himself went out to fight, or that he is hungry and naked because he did not want to work, — he knows that he is suffering because he has done what he ought not to do, and in order that he may not do so again in the future; and, directing his activity upon the destruction of the error, he is not provoked at the suffering, and bears it lightly and often with joy. But when such a man is assailed by suffering which is beyond the limit of the visible connection of suffering and error, — as when he suffers from causes which have always been outside his personal activity, or when the consequences of his sufferings cannot be of any use either to his personality, or to any other, — it seems to him that he is assailed by what ought not to be, and he asks himself why? what for? and, finding no object on which to direct his activity, he is provoked against the suffering, and his suffering becomes a terrible torment. But the majority of the sufferings of man are such that their causes or consequences — at times both — are hidden from him in space and time: such are hereditary diseases, unfortunate accidents, failures of crops, wrecks, fires, earthquakes, and so forth, which end in death.

The explanations that this is necessary in order to teach a lesson to future men, how they should not abandon themselves to those passions which are reflected as diseases on their posterity, or how they should build better trains and be more cautious with fire, — all these explanations do not give me any answer. I cannot recognize any meaning of my life in the illustration of the neglects of other people: my life is my life, with my striving after the good, and not an illustration for other lives. These explanations are good enough for conversation, but do not alleviate that terror before the meaninglessness of the sufferings with which I am threatened, and by which the possibility of life is excluded.

But even if it were possible in some way to understand this, that, while I by my errors cause others to suffer, I with my errors also bear the errors of others; if it is possible even most distantly to understand that every suffering is an indication of an error, which must be corrected by men in this life, there is still left an enormous series of sufferings which cannot be explained in any way. A man is all alone in the woods, where he is torn to pieces by wolves; or he is drowned, or frozen, or burned, or simply falls ill in solitude and dies, and no one ever finds out how he suffered, and thousands of similar cases. Of what use will this be to any one?

For a man who understands his life as animal existence there is no explanation, and there can be none, because for such a man the connection between the suffering and the error is only in phenomena which are visible to him, but this connection completely slips away from his mental vision at the time of his death agony.

A man has choice between two things: either, by not recognizing the connection between the sufferings which he experiences and his life, to continue to bear the majority of his sufferings as torments which have no meaning whatever, or to acknowledge that my errors and my acts, which are committed as the result of them, — my sins, no matter what they may be, are the cause of my sufferings, whatever they be, and that my sufferings are a liberation and redemption of my sins and of those of any other men.

Only these two relations to suffering are possible: one, that suffering is what it ought not to be, because I do not see its external meaning, and the other, that it is what it ought to be, because I know its internal meaning for my true life. The first results from acknowledging as the good the good of my separate personal life. The other results from recognizing as the good the good of my whole life of the past and the future in an uninterrupted union with the good of other men and beings. With the first view, the sufferings have no explanation whatever and evoke no other activity than a constantly growing and insoluble despair and infuriation; with the second, the sufferings evoke the same activity which forms the motion of the true life, — the consciousness of the sin, the liberation from error, and the subjection to the law of reason.

If it is not man's reason, it is the agony of his suffering that involuntarily compels him to recognize that his life is not coextensive with his personality; that personality is only the visible part of his whole life; that the external nexus of cause and action, which is visible to him from his personality, does not coincide with that internal nexus of cause and action, which is always known to man from his rational consciousness.

The connection between error and suffering, which is visible to the animal only in spatial and temporal relations, is always clear to man outside these conditions in his consciousness. Suffering, whatever it be, is always cognized by man as a result of his sin, whatever it be, and the repentance of his sin — as a liberation from suffering and attainment of the good.

The whole of man's life from the first days of his childhood consists in nothing but this: in the consciousness of sin through suffering, and in the liberation of self from error. I know that I came into this life with a certain knowledge of the truth, and that, the more error there was in me, the more suffering there was both of my own and of other men; the more I free myself from error, the less suffering there was of my own and of other people, and the greater was the good which I attained. And so I know that the greater the knowledge of the truth is which I carry out of this world, and which is given to me by my suffering, even though it be the last, before death, the greater is the good that I attain.

The agony of suffering is experienced by him alone who, having segregated himself from the life of the world, and not seeing those sins of his, by means of which he brought suffering into the world, regards himself as innocent, and so is provoked at those sufferings which he endures for the sins of the world.

And, strange to say, the same that is clear to the reason, mentally, is confirmed in the one true activity of life, in love. Reason says that a man who recognizes the connection of his sins and sufferings with the sins and sufferings of the world, is freed from the agony of suffering; love proves this in fact.

One-half of the life of each man passes in sufferings which he not only does not recognize as agonizing and does not notice, but even considers his good, only because they are endured as the consequences of error and as a means for alleviating the sufferings of beloved persons. Thus, the less there is love, the more is man subject to the agony of suffering, and the more there is love, the less there is of the agony of suffering; but a completely rational life, the whole activity of which is manifested only in love, excludes the possibility of any suffering. The agony of suffering is only that pain which men experience in the attempts at severing that chain of love for their ancestors, their posterity, their contemporaries, which unites the life of man with the life of the world.

XXXV.

PHYSICAL SUFFERINGS FORM THE NECESSARY CONDITION OF THE LIFE AND GOOD OF MAN

"STILL it pains, it pains bodily. What is this pain for?" ask people.

"Because we not only need it, but also could not live if we did not experience pain," would reply he who caused us the pain, and made this pain as little as he could, and the good from this pain as great as he could.

Who does not know that the very first sensation of pain is our first and chief means for the preservation of our body and the continuation of our animal life, and that if this did not exist, we should, while we are children, have burned up and cut to pieces our whole body? Physical pain preserves the animal personality. And as long as pain acts as a preservative of the personality, as is the case in the child, this pain cannot be that terrifying torment as which we know pain at a time when we are in the full force of our rational consciousness and struggle against the pain, recognizing it as something which ought not to be. Pain in the animal and in the child is a very definite and insignificant quantity, which never rises to that agony, to which it rises in a being that is endowed with a rational consciousness. In the child we see that it sometimes cries as pitifully from the bite of a flea as from a pain that destroys its internal organs. The pain of an irrational being leaves no trace in the memory. Let a man try to recall his childish sufferings of pain, and he will see that he not only has no recollection of them, but is not even able to reconstruct them in his imagination. Our impression at the sight of the sufferings of children and animals is more our own suffering than theirs. The external expression of the suffering of irrational beings is immeasurably greater than the suffering itself, and so to an immeasurably greater degree provokes our sympathy, as we may see in the case of the diseases of the brain, of fevers, of all kinds of agonies.

At a time when the rational consciousness is not yet awakened, and the pain serves only as a preservation of the personality, it is not agonizing; but at a time when there is in man the possibility of a rational consciousness, it is a means for subjecting the animal personality to reason, and in proportion as this consciousness is awakened, it becomes less and less agonizing.

In reality, only when we are in full possession of our rational consciousness can we speak of sufferings, because only with this state begins that life and those conditions which we call sufferings. In this state the sensation of pain may be expanded to the greatest and narrowed down to the most insignificant proportions. Indeed, who does not know, without studying physiology, that there is a limit to sensitiveness, that with the increase of pain to a certain limit sensitiveness stops, — there is syncope, dulness, delirium, — or death ensues. The increase of pain is, therefore, a very definite quantity, which cannot surpass its limits. But the sensation of pain may be increased from our relation to it to infinity, and even so may be reduced to an infinitely small amount.

We all know how a man, by submitting to pain and recognizing pain as something which ought to be, is able to reduce it to insensibility, even to the sensation of pleasure in enduring it. Not to speak of the martyrs, of Huss, who sang at the stake, simple people, from a desire of showing their bravery, endure without a cry, or jerking, operations which are considered extremely painful. There is a limit to the increase of pain, but there is no limit to the diminution of its sensation.

The torments of pain are really terrible for those men who have placed their life in the carnal existence. How can they help being terrible, since the force of reason which is given man for the purpose of destroying the agony of suffering is directed only to increasing it?

In Plato there is a myth about God's having at first set the term of seventy years to man's life, but later, when he saw that men fared worse from it, he changed it to what it is now, that is, he made it so that people do not know the hour of their death. Just as correctly would the rationale of what exists be defined by a myth which would say that men were originally created without the sensation of pain, but that later it was created for their good.

If the gods had created men without the sensation of pain, men would soon have begun to ask for it; without child labour women would bring forth children under such conditions that only extremely few would be left alive; children and young people would ruin their bodies, and grown men would never know the errors of men who lived before them or who are living now, nor, above all, their own errors: they would not know what to do in this life, — they would have no rational aim in their activity, could never make their peace with the thought of their imminent death, and would have no love.

For a man who understands life as the subjection of his personality to the law of reason, pain is not only no evil, but even a necessary condition, both of his animal and his rational life. If there were no pain, the animal personality would have no indication of the departures from this law; if the rational consciousness did not experience any suffering, man would not know the truth, — he would not know his law.

"But you are speaking," some will say to this, "of your own sufferings: how can you deny the sufferings of others? The sight of these sufferings is the most agonizing suffering," these people will say, not quite sincerely.

The suffering of others? But the sufferings of others, what you call sufferings, have never stopped. The whole world of men and animals suffer and have always suffered. Have we really just learned this? Wounds, mutilations, hunger, cold, diseases, all kinds of unfortunate accidents, and, above all, childbirth, without which none of us has ever come into the world, — all these are necessary conditions of existence. It is precisely this — the diminution of it, the aid offered to it — that forms the contents of the true life of men, and to it the true activity of life is directed. The comprehension of the sufferings of personalities and of the causes of human errors, and the activity for their reduction are precisely that which forms the business of the human life. This is precisely why I am a man, a personality, — that I may understand the sufferings of other people; and for this I am a rational consciousness, that in the suffering of each separate personality I may see the common cause of suffering, — of error, — and may be able to destroy it in myself and in others. How, then, can the material of his labour be the cause of the labourer's suffering? It is the same as though a ploughman should say that the unploughed land is his suffering. The unploughed land can be a source of suffering only to him who wants to see the land ploughed, but does not consider it the business of his life to do the ploughing.

The activity which is directed upon the immediate service of love to the sufferers and upon the destruction of the common causes of suffering — of errors — is that only joyful work which is incumbent on man and gives him that inalienable good in which his life consists.

There is but one suffering for man, and it is that which compels man against his will to abandon himself to the life in which alone his good lies.

This suffering is the consciousness of the contradiction between his sinfulness and that of the whole world on the one hand, and, on the other, the necessity, and not only the possibility, of realizing, through me, and not through any one else, the whole truth in my life and in that of the whole world. It is impossible to allay this suffering by not seeing one's own sin, while participating in the sin of the world, and still less, by ceasing to believe in the possibility, as well as in the necessity, of realizing, through myself, and not through any one else, the whole truth in my life and in that of the whole world. The first only increases my sufferings; the second deprives me of the forces of life. What allays this suffering is nothing but the consciousness and activity of the true life, which destroy the incommensurableness of the personal life with the aim, as cognized by man. Man must involuntarily admit that his life is not limited to his personality from birth until death, and that the aim which he recognizes is accessible, and that in striving after it, — in the recognition of his greater and still greater sinfulness and of the greater and ever greater realization of the whole truth in his life and in the life of the world has always consisted, and always will consist, the work of his life, which is inseparable from the life of the whole world.

If it is not the rational consciousness, it is the suffering, which results from the error in respect to the meaning of man's life, that against his will pushes him on the one true path of life, on which there are no obstacles, no evil, but only the inviolable, ungenerated, undying, ever-increasing good.

CONCLUSION

Man's life is a striving after the good, and what he strives after is given to him.

The evil in the shape of death and of sufferings is visible to man only when he takes the law of his carnal animal existence to be the law of his life.

Only when, being man, he descends to the level of an animal, does he see death and sufferings. Death and sufferings, like scarecrows, frighten him on all sides, and drive him back to the one open road of human life, which is subject to his law of reason and finds its expression in love. Death and sufferings are only man's transgressions of his law of life. For a man who lives according to his law there is no death and no suffering.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. xi. 28–30).

Man's life is a striving after the good; what he is striving after is given to him, namely, life, which cannot be death, and the good, which cannot be evil.

APPENDIX I.

It is generally said that we study life not from the consciousness of our life, but in general from without. But this is the same as saying that we observe objects not with our eyes, but in general from without.

We see objects outside ourselves because we see them in our eyes, and we know life outside ourselves because we know it within ourselves. We see objects only as we see them in our eyes, and we define life outside ourselves only as we know it in ourselves. But we know life in ourselves as a striving after the good: and so, if we do not define life as a striving after the good, we not only are unable to observe, but even to see, life.

The first and chief act of our cognition of living beings is this, that we include many different objects in the concept of one living being, and exclude this living being from everything else. Both we do only on the basis of the definition of life, cognized alike by all of us, as a striving after the good, and of self, as a being distinct from the whole world.

We recognize that a man on a horse is not a multiplicity of beings and not one being, not because we observe all the parts which form a man and a horse, but because neither in the heads, nor in the legs, nor in any other parts of the man and the horse do we see such a separate striving after the good as we know in ourselves. And we know that the man on the horse is not one, but two beings, because we know in them two distinct strivings after the good, whereas in ourselves we know but one such.

Only thus do we know that there is life in the combination of the rider and horse, and in a herd of horses, and in birds, in insects, in trees, in the grass. If we did not know that the horse wishes its own good and a man his own, that the same is desired by every individual horse in the herd, that the individual good is desired by each bird, bug, tree, weed, we should not see the individuality of beings, and, not seeing the individuality, we should never be able to comprehend anything living: a regiment of cavalry, a herd, and the birds, and the insects, and the plants, — everything would be like waves on the ocean, and the whole world would blend for us into one undistinguishable motion, in which we should entirely fail to find life.

If I know that the horse, and the dog, and the tick that is sticking to it, are living beings, and am able to observe them, this is so because the horse, the dog, and the tick have their individual aims, each for its own good. But this I know, because I know myself as such a being which is striving after the good.

In this striving after the good consists the foundation of .all knowledge of life. Without recognizing the fact that the striving after the good, which each man feels in himself, is the life and symptom of all life, no study of life, no observation of life, is possible. And so observation begins when life is already known, and no observation on the phenomena of life can (as the false science assumes) determine life itself.

Men do not acknowledge the definition of life as a striving after the good which they find in their consciousness, but they recognize the possibility of the knowledge of this striving in the tick, and on the basis of this assumed. unfounded knowledge of the good after which the tick strives, they make observations and conclusions as to the essence of life itself.

Every conception of mine about the external life is based on the consciousness of my striving after the good; and so, only by having come to understand wherein my good and my life consist, shall I be able to know what the good and the life of other beings are. But, if I do not understand my own good, I shall never be able to understand that good and the life of other beings.

Observations on other beings, which strive after their own aims, that are unknown to me, and that form a semblance to that good the striving after which I know in myself, not only are unable to explain anything to me, but certainly can conceal from me my true knowledge of life.

To study the life of other beings, without having a definition of my own, is the same as describing a circle without having a centre. Only by establishing one invariable point as the centre, are we able to describe a circle. No matter what figures we draw, they will not be circles, if they have no centre.

APPENDIX II.

THE false science, in studying the phenomena which accompany life, and purporting to study life itself, by this very intention corrupts the concept of life; and so, the longer it studies the phenomenon of what it calls life, the more it departs from the concept of life, which it wants to study.

At first they study the mammals, then other animals, the vertebrates, fishes, plants, corals, cells, microscopic organisms, and finally reach a point where we lose the distinction between animate and inanimate, between the limits of the organism and the non-organism, between the limits of one organism and another. They reach a point where that which cannot be observed presents itself as the most important subject of investigation and observation. The mystery of life and the explanation is sought in commas and twinkles invisible but assumed, discovered to-day, forgotten to-morrow. The explanation of everything is sought in those beings which are contained in the microscopic beings, and in those that are in them, and so forth, *ad infinitum*, as though the infinite divisibility of what is small were not the same kind of an infinity as the infinitely great. The mystery will be revealed when the whole infinity of the small shall be fully investigated, that is, never. And men do not see that the assumption that the question finds its solution in the infinitely small is an undoubted proof of this, that the question is incorrectly put. And this last stage of madness, which clearly shows the complete loss of sense in the investigations, is regarded as the triumph of science: the highest degree of blindness is considered as the highest degree of vision. Men have gone into a blind alley and so show the lie of the road on which they have been travelling. There is no end to their raptures: "We will make the microscopes just a little more powerful, and we shall understand the transition from the inorganic to the organic, and from the organic to the psychical, and the whole mystery of life will be revealed to us."

While studying the shadows instead of the objects, men have entirely forgotten that object the shadow of which they have been investigating, and busying themselves more and more with the shadow, they have come to complete darkness, and are happy to find the shadow so compact.

The meaning of life is revealed in the consciousness of man as a striving after the good. The elucidation of this good, a more and more exact definition of it, forms the chief aim and work of the life of all humanity, and now, because this work is difficult, that is, not play, but work, people decide that the definition of this good cannot be found where it is put down, that is, in the rational consciousness of man, and that, therefore, it has to be sought everywhere, except where it is shown.

This is something like what a man would do, who would throw away a note, on which precise directions are given to him, because he cannot read it, and would keep asking all the men whom he meets to tell him what it is he wants. The definition of life, which is sketched in man's soul with indelible letters, namely, in his striving after the good, is sought by men everywhere except in man's consciousness itself. This is the more strange since all humanity, in the persons of its wisest representatives, beginning with the Greek utterance, which was, "Know thyself," has always said the very opposite. All the religious teachings are nothing but definitions of life as a striving after the real, infallible good which is accessible to man.

APPENDIX III.

More and more clearly does man hear the voice of reason; more and more often does man listen to this voice, and the time is coming and is already at hand when this voice shall be stronger than the voice which calls to the personal good and to the deceptive duty. On the one hand it becomes more and more clear that the life of personality with its enticements cannot give the good, and, on the other, that the payment of any debt, as prescribed by men, is only a deception, which deprives man of the possibility of paying the one debt of man to that rational and good principle from which he has come. That ancient deception, which demands a faith in what has no rational explanation, is worn out, and we can no longer return to it.

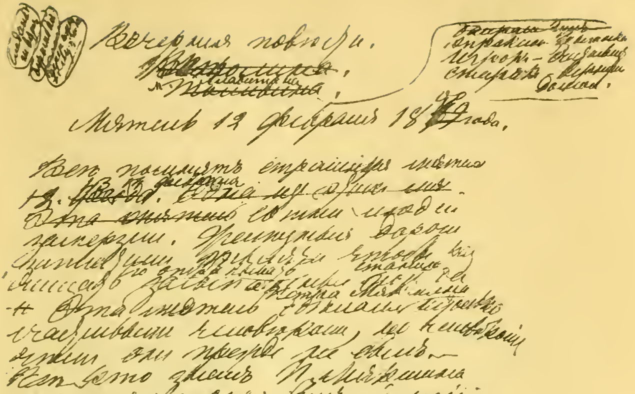
Formerly they used to say: do not reflect, but believe in the duty alone which we prescribe. Reason will deceive you. Faith only will reveal the true good of your life to you. And man tried to believe, and believed; but his relations with other men showed him that other men believed in something quite different and asserted that that something else gave a greater good to man. It became inevitable to solve the question which of the many faiths was the more correct one; but this can be decided only by reason.

Man always cognizes everything through his reason, and not through faith. It was possible to deceive him, by asserting that he cognizes through faith, and not through reason; but the moment a man knows two faiths and sees men who profess another faith just as he professes his own, he is placed in the inevitable necessity of deciding the matter by means of his reason. A Buddhist who has become acquainted with Mohammedanism and yet remains a Buddhist will be such no longer by faith, but by reason. The moment there arises before him another faith and the question as to whether he should reject his own or the one which is proposed to him, the question will inevitably be decided by reason. And if he, having become acquainted with Mohammedanism, remains a Buddhist, his former blind faith in Buddha will now inevitably be based on rational foundations.

The attempts which are made in our day to pour the spiritual contents into a man through faith, despite his reason, — are the same as attempting to feed a man in any other way than through his mouth.

The communion of people among themselves has shown them that common foundation of cognition, and they can no longer return to their former errors, — and the time is coming and is already at hand when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and, having heard it, shall come to life.

It is impossible to drown this voice, because it is not the voice of just one person, but of the whole rational consciousness of humanity, which finds its expression in every separate man, and in the best men of humanity and now even in the majority of men.



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THOUGHTS ON GOD

From Tolstóy's diaries, private letters, memorandum-books, drafts of unfinished writings, and similar unpublished private papers

1885 – 1900

THOUGHTS ON GOD

God is for me that after which I strive, that the striving after which forms my life, and who, therefore, *is* for for me; but he is necessarily such that I cannot comprehend or name him. If I comprehended him, I would reach him, and there would be nothing to strive after, and no life. But, though it seems a contradiction, I cannot comprehend or name him, and yet I know him,—know the direction toward him, and of all my knowledge this is the most reliable.

I do not know him, and yet I always feel terribly when I am without him, and only then do I not feel terribly when I am with him. What is stranger still is this, that in my present life I do not need to know him better and more than I know him now. I can approach him, and I want to, and in this does my life consist, but my approach in no way increases or can increase my knowledge.

Every attempt of the imagination at cognizing him (for example, that he is a creator, or merciful, or something like it) removes me from him and cuts off my approach to him.

Stranger still is this, that I can love him alone as is proper, that is, more than myself and more than anything; in this love alone is there no cessation, no diminution (on the contrary, a constant increase), no sensuality, no terror, no self-satisfaction. Everything good you love through this love, so that it turns out that you love, and so live, through him and by him.

So this is the way I think, or, rather, feel. All I have to add is, that the pronoun *he* somewhat impairs God for me. "He" seems to minimize him.

To the definition of God for me it is necessary to add M. Arnold's definition, which I have always conceived as one, the chief, side from which God presents himself to us. (M. Arnold deduces his definition from the prophets of the Old Testament, and, indeed, before Christ it is sufficiently full.) God is that endless, eternal principle, which is outside us, leading us, demanding righteousness of us. We may say: the law of human life is God's will in relation to that part of human life which is in the power of men. I say that this definition was sufficient before Christ, but Christ has revealed to us that the fulfilment of this law, besides its external obligatoriness for human reason, has also another, simpler, internal impulse, which embraces the whole being of man, — namely, love, — not of woman, child, country, and so forth, but love of God (God is love), the love of love, — that very feeling of goodness, meekness of spirit, joy of life, which is the blessed, true, deathless life, characteristic of man.

You know God not so much by means of reason, not even by means of your heart, as by the complete dependence felt in relation to him, something like the feeling which a suckling babe experiences in the arms of its mother. It does not know who holds it, who warms and feeds it; but it knows that there is somebody who does this, and, moreover, loves this person.

I had formerly seen the phenomena of life, without thinking whence they came, or why I saw them.

Later I understood that everything which I see comes from the light which is the comprehension; and I was so glad of having reduced everything to one principle that I was fully satisfied with the recognition of comprehension alone as the beginning of everything.

Later, however, I saw that the comprehension is the light which reaches me through a hazy glass. I see the light, but I do not know what it is that gives the light: I know only that it exists.

This something which is the source of the light that illumines me, and which I do not know, but of the existence of which I know, is God.

It is remarkable how I could have lived before without seeing the unquestionable truth that beyond this world and our life in it there is some one, something for which this world exists, and we bubble up in it, burst and disappear, like bubbles in boiling water.

You say: "It is impossible to understand how God sat, — sat somewhere in eternity, and suddenly resolved, 'Well, I will create the world,' and began to create, saying all the time, 'It is well.'"

It is true, you and I cannot understand it, when we ask nothing, and are suddenly told so.

But tell me, can we understand that everything which is, has been, and had no beginning? Impossible!

And you say that there is a beginning to everything, and, ascending from beginning to beginning, you have gone very far and by guesses have ascended not seven thousand years, but much farther. And there you see not only the formation of the earth and of everything living upon it, but also the formation of the sun, and much farther — But, no matter how far you have gone, you acknowledge that the beginning of all beginnings is as far off and as inaccessible as ever. And still you continue seeking the beginning of beginnings; to this your vision is turned, and from this, you say, everything was originated.

Well, this very thing, not the part, but the beginning of beginnings, I call God.

Consequently, when I say God, you cannot misunderstand and condemn me. We both of us know him, because we believe alike, and no one can demand of us that we should understand God as such as he is in the Book of Genesis.

We must renounce that by means of which we understand, our reason, that we may understand him as such. Even so no one can demand of Moses that he should understand the heavens, the sun, and the stars better than the earth. The answer of Moses to the question whence we come is the same which you gave: "From the beginning of beginnings, from God."

"But," you will say, "this beginning of beginnings is far from being that which is understood by the word *God*. By this word they understand a being which cares for men. They say that he wrote the law with his finger, appeared in the burning bush, sent his son, and so forth; all that does not exist in a rational comprehension of the beginning."

I agree with such words. In the beginning of beginnings there is not that God.

But as inexplicable as a living, pitying, loving, and angry God is to you, so incomprehensible is to the human mind what he himself is, what his life is.

Tell me what life is, and I will tell you what the living God is.

You say, "Life is a false consciousness of its freedom, of the gratification of its needs, and of the choice between them."

But whence did this life come?

You say, "It was evolved out of the lower organisms."

But the lower organisms already bore in themselves this consciousness, — and whence did the lower organisms come?

You say, "From the infinite beginning." This I call God.

I say: "The consciousness of my life, the consciousness of freedom is God; but this is not all of God."

In addition to this, that I am, that I live, strive after the gratification of my needs, recognize the freedom of my choice, I have also reason, which guides me in my choice.

Whence is reason? This reason seeks the beginning, struggles with man himself, vanquishes him, subdues his appetites, enacts laws for him. Tell me: Whence comes this reason of man, which enacts laws that are contrary to the impulses of the flesh?

You say: "These laws are from man."

But whence comes man's reason?

"From the evolution of the living?"

And the living from what is not living? But even in the non-living there were these germs. In the detached parts of the rotating sun, there were already the germs of reason. And in the sun and those stars, from which the sun broke loose?

If there is reason, and it is due to evolution, its beginning is just as much concealed in infinity.

Now this beginning of the beginnings of reason is also God.

Both with you and with me there exist the same conceptions of the beginning, which are, that the beginning of life and the beginning of reason merge into one.

You point only to the train of your thought, and I call everything God; the reason I call it so is this, that I must give some name to what you only indicate, and what with you breaks up into three paths of thought.

I frequently meet men who recognize no God except the one which we recognize within ourselves. And I wonder. God is in me. But God is an infinite beginning; how, then, and for what purpose did he turn up in me? You cannot help asking yourself about this, and the moment you ask, you must acknowledge an external cause. Why are people not in need of an answer to this question? Because the answer to this question is for them in the reality of the existing world. It is the same according to Moses, or according to Darwin. And so, in order to understand about the external God, we must understand that what is actually real is only the impression of our feelings, that is, ourselves, our spiritual ego.

What is God? What is God for?

God is all that unlimited which I know as limited in myself; I am a limited body, God is an unlimited body; I am a being that has lived for sixty-three years, God is a being that lives eternally; I am a being that thinks within the limits of my understanding, God is a being that thinks without limitation; I am a being that sometimes loves a little, God is a being that loves always infinitely. I am a part, he is everything. I cannot remember myself otherwise than as a part of him.

When an unsolved question troubles you, you feel yourself a sick member of some kind of a healthy body, — you feel yourself an ailing tooth of a sound body, and you ask the whole body to help the one member.

The whole body is God; I am the member.

One of the superstitions which most puzzles our metaphysical concepts is this: that the world was created, that it came out of nothing, and that there is a creating God.

In reality, we have no ground for assuming a creating God, and there is no need for it the (Chinese and Hindoos do not know this conception); at the same time

God the creator and the provider are not compatible with the Christian God the Father, God the Spirit, God, a particle of whom lives in me and forms my life, and the manifestation and evocation of whom forms the meaning of my life, — God the love.

God the creator is indifferent and admits suffering. God the spirit releases from suffering and is always the perfect good. There is no God the creator. There is I who by means of the implements of the sensations given to me cognize the world, and know inwardly my God the Father. He is the beginning of my spiritual ego, but the external world is only my limit.

Frequently people, who are struck down with grief by the death of a beloved being, speak of the evil which God causes to men. When people speak and think thus, they imagine that they believe in God and pray to him.

God does evil. If God does evil, he is not good, — he is not love; and if he is not good, he does not exist.

This is due to the fact that people are so convinced that what they do badly is not only good, but even excellent (as they assure us that to love [excessively] their children is beautiful), that, when they experience that evil which is only the result of their own mistakes, — their sins, they do not accuse themselves, but God. And so they in the depth of their souls recognize God as bad, that is, they deny him, and so receive no consolation from him.

We ought to do what the Dukhobors do, — bow to the ground before each man, remembering that God is in him. If we cannot do so with the body, we may with the spirit.

The consciousness, the sensation of God, who lives in me and acts through me, cannot always be perceived.

There are activities to which we must abandon ourselves completely, inseparably, without thinking of anything but of this work. It is impossible therewith to think of God, — it distracts and is unnecessary.

We must live simply, without effort, abandoning ourselves to our preoccupation; but the moment there appears internal doubt, struggle, dejection, terror, ill-will, we must recognize in ourselves our spiritual being, recognizing our connection with God, at once transfer ourselves from the carnal sphere to that of the spirit, not in order that we may get away from the work of life, but in order, on the contrary, to gather strength for its accomplishment, in order to vanquish and overcome the obstacle. We must, like a bird, move along with the feet, having folded the wings; but the moment there is an obstacle, we must unfold our wings and fly away. And everything is easy, and every difficulty will disappear.

What comes of this, that man recognizes his ego not as a separate being, but as God who is living in him?

In the first place this, that, since he does not consciously wish any good for his separate being, such a man will not deprive others, or will deprive them with less intensity, of their good; in the second place, this, that by recognizing God, who wishes well to everything which exists, as his own ego, man will wish the same.

Prayer is addressed to the personal God, not because he is personal (indeed, I know for certain that he is not personal, because personality is limitation, while God is unlimited), but because I am a personal being. I have a green glass over my eye, and I see everything green; I cannot help but see the world green, though I know that it is not.

This is what has happened with me: I have begun to think more and more abstractly of the questions of life, — of what it consists in, what it tends to, what love is, and

I have departed more and more not only from the conception of the Old Testament God the creator, but also from the conception of the Father, of that comprehension of the good, the beginning of all life and of me; and the devil caught me: it began to occur to me that it was possible — an idea which is of especial importance for a union with the Chinese, the Confucianists, the Buddhists, and our infidels, the agnostics — entirely to obviate this conception. I thought that it was possible to be satisfied with the mere conception and recognition of that God who is in me, without recognizing the God in myself, that God who has put a particle of himself into me. And, strange to say, I suddenly began to feel weary, dejected, terrible. I did not know why it was so, but I felt that I had suddenly fallen terribly in spirit, was deprived of every spiritual joy and energy.

And it was only then that I guessed that it was so because I had departed from God. And I began to think, — strange to say, — began to divine whether there was a God, or not, and, as it were, found him anew, and I experienced such joy, and I had such firm confidence in him and in this, that I can and must commune with him, and that he hears me, that these last days I have been experiencing a feeling as though I were very happy, and I ask myself, Why am I so happy? Yes, there is a God, and I do not have to be troubled or fear anything, but can rejoice.

I am afraid that this feeling will pass and become dulled, but now I experience much joy. It is as though I had been within a hair's breadth of losing, and even thought that I had lost, a very dear being, and had really not lost it, but found out its inestimable value. I hope that though this, my most ecstatic mood, may pass, much of what I have newly acquired will remain.

Maybe it is that which some call the living God; if that is so, I am very guilty toward them, since I did not agree with them and disputed their opinions.

The main thing in this feeling is the consciousness of a complete security, the consciousness that he is, that he is good, that he knows me, and that I am on all sides surrounded by him, have come from him, form part of him, am his child; everything which seems bad seems so only because I believe myself, and not him, and out of this life, in which it is so easy to do his will, because this will is at the same time my will, I cannot fall anywhere except into him, and in him there is full joy and goodness.

Everything I may write now will not express what I felt. If I have some physical or moral pain, — a son dies, that which I love perishes, — and I myself can do nothing, and sufferings await me, — I suddenly think, And God? and everything becomes good and happy and clear. . . .

There is not one believer who is not assailed by moments of doubt, of doubt in the existence of God. These doubts are not harmful: on the contrary, they lead to the highest comprehension of God.

That God whom I knew became familiar to me, and I no longer believed in him. A man believes fully in God only when he is revealed anew to him, and he is revealed to man from a new side, when he is sought with a man's whole soul.

I have thought much about God, about the essence of my life, and, it seemed, I doubted both and verified my deductions; and then, lately, I simply just wanted to lean on my faith in God and in the indestructibleness of my soul, and, to my surprise, I experienced such a firm, calm confidence as I had never experienced before. Thus all the doubts and verifications apparently not only did not weaken, but even enormously strengthened faith.

One needs never go on purpose to God: "I will just go to God, I will live in godly fashion. I have lived in devilish fashion, and so now will live in a godly way,—I will try, maybe it is no misfortune." It is a misfortune, and a great one at that. To God, as in marrying, one must go only when one would like not to go, and would like not to marry, but cannot help oneself. . . . And so I will not say to everybody: "Go purposely into offences;" but to him who puts the question like this, Shall I not make a mistake if I go to God, instead of going to the devil? I will shout with might and main, "Go, go to the devil, by all means to the devil." It is a hundred times better to burn oneself on the devil than to stand on the crossway or hypocritically to go to God.

I have read Spencer's answer to Balfour: it is the confession of agnosticism, as they now call atheism.

I say agnosticism, though it wants to be something different from atheism in that it advances a certain impossibility of knowledge; but in reality it is the same as atheism, because the root of everything is the non-recognition of God.

So I read Spencer, who says: "It is not that I *wish* to reject the faith in God, but that I *must*: self-deception is the alternative. There is no pleasure," he says, "in the consciousness of being a small bubble on a globe that is in itself infinitesimal compared with the totality of things." (I should like to ask him what he means by totality of things.) "Those on whom the unpitying rush of changes inflicts sufferings which are often without remedy find no consolation in the thought that they are at the mercy of blind forces which cause, indifferently, now the destruction of a sun and now the death of an animalcule. Contemplation of a universe which is without conceivable beginning or end, and without intelligible purpose, yields no satisfaction. The desire to know what it all means is no less strong in the agnostic than in others, and raises sympathy with them. Failing utterly to find any interpretation himself, he feels a regretful inability to accept the interpretation they offer."

Precisely the same thing N—— told me the other day: "There takes place a kind of circular motion, and amidst this motion, endless in time and space, I appear, and live, and disappear, — so much is certain. But everything else, that is, the conception of a rational being from whom I came, and for the attainment of whose purpose I exist, together with everything which exists, — such a conception is self-deception."

These two variant and opposite world conceptions must be represented as follows:

Some, the agnostics, say: "I see myself, a being born of my parents, such as all the living beings which surround me and which live in certain conditions that are subject to my investigation and study, and I study myself and the other beings, both the animate and the inanimate, and those conditions in which they live; and I arrange my life in conformity with this study. Questions of origin I investigate in the same manner, and by observation and experience attain greater and greater knowledge. But the question as to whence all this world came, why it exists, and I in it, I leave unanswered, as I see no possibility of answering it as definitely, clearly, and convincingly as I answer the questions in regard to everything which exists in the universe. And so I do not recognize the answer to this question, which is, that there exists a rational being, God, from whom I originate" (Generally they say "from whom the universe has its beginning," meaning by this origin the creation of the universe, which the Christian teaching does not assert), "and who has determined the law of my life for certain purposes of his own, — this answer to the question I do not recognize, since it has not that clearness and conclusiveness which the scientific answers have in respect to questions of causes and conditions of various vital phenomena." Thus speaks the agnostic, and, by not admitting the possibility of any other knowledge than the one which is obtained by means of observation and of reflection on these observations, he is, though not right, at least logically quite consistent.

But a Christian, a man who recognizes God, says: "I recognize myself as living only because I recognize myself as a rational being; since I recognize myself as rational, I cannot help but acknowledge that my life and that of everything in existence must be just as rational. In order to be rational, it must have a purpose. Now, the purpose of this life must be outside me, in that being for whom I and everything in existence serve as a tool for the accomplishment of his purpose. This being exists, and I must in life fulfil his law (will). But the questions as to what this being is that demands of me the fulfilment of its law, and when this rational life in me had its beginning, and how it originates in other beings in time and space, that is, what God is, whether personal or impersonal, how he created, and whether he created the world, and when the soul arose in me, and at what age, and how it originates in others, and whence it comes and whither it goes, and in what part of the body it lives, — all these questions I must leave unanswered because I know in advance that in the sphere of observation and reasoning concerning them I shall never arrive at a final answer, since everything will be concealed in time and space. For this reason I do not admit the answers given by science as to how the world, the suns, the earth began, how the soul begins, and in what part of the cerebral brain it is to be found."

In the first case, the agnostic, by acknowledging himself to be only an animal being, and so recognizing only this, that he is subject to external sensations, does not recognize the spiritual principle and is reconciled to the stupidity of his existence, which violates the demands of reason. In the second case, the Christian, by recognizing himself only as a rational being, and so recognizing only that which corresponds to the demands of reason, does not acknowledge the actuality of the data of external experimentation, and so regards these data as fantastical and erroneous.

Both are equally right. But the difference, the material difference, between them is this, that according to the first world conception everything in the world is strictly scientific, logical, and rational, with the exception of the life of man himself and of the whole universe, which has no meaning; and so, in spite of all attempts to the contrary, there result from such a world conception many interesting and amusing reflections, but nothing needful for guidance in life; while according to the second world conception the life of man and of the whole universe receives a definite and rational meaning, and a very direct, simple, and accessible application to life, whereby the possibility of scientific investigations is not excluded, except that these investigations occupy their appropriate place.

Nothing proves better the existence of God than the attempts of the evolutionists at recognizing morality and deducing it from the struggle.

It is evident that it cannot result from struggle; and yet they feel that they cannot get along without it, and so try to deduce it from their propositions, although to deduce it from the theory of evolution is as strange or even stranger and more illogical than to deduce it from the precepts given by the Jewish God on Sinai. Their error, which consists in this, that they deny the consciousness of their spiritual ego as the production of God, of a particle of him, without whom there can be no rational world conception, compels them to admit the unjustified and even contradictory mystery, that is, in respect to morality, of that very God whom they have excluded from their world conception.

The other day a Frenchman asked me whether morality would not be sufficiently well based on goodness and beauty, that is, again on God, whom they, by dint of the spiritual disease which assails them, are afraid to name.

They say: "God must be understood as a personality."

There is here a great misconception: personality is limitation. Man feels himself as a personality, only because he is in contact with other personalities. If man were alone, he would not be a personality. The two conceptions, the outer world, — other beings, — and personality, define one another. If there did not exist a world of other beings, man would not feel himself (would not be conscious of) as a personality, — he would not recognize the existence of other beings. Thus man in the world cannot be thought of otherwise than as a personality. But how can we say of God that he is a personality, that God is personal? In this lies the root of anthropomorphism. Of God we can say only what Moses and Mohammed said, — that he is one; not one in the sense that there is no other God, — in relation to God there cannot be the concept of number, and so we cannot say that he is one (one in the sense of a number), — but in this sense, that he is unicentric, that he is not a concept, but a being, — what the Orthodox call a living God, in contradistinction to the pantheistic God, that is, a higher spiritual being which lives in everything. He is one in this sense, that, as a being, he exists, and may be turned to, that is, not exactly by praying, — which is a relation between me, a limited being, a personality, and incomprehensible, but existing God. The chief incomprehensibility of God consists even in this, that we know him as one being, — we cannot know him otherwise, — and yet we cannot understand one being as filling everything. If God is not one, he melts away, he does not exist. If he is one, we involuntarily imagine him in the form of personality, and then he is no longer a higher being, no longer everything. And yet, in order that we may know God and lean on him, we must understand him as filling all and at the same time as one.

The world is such as we see it, only if there do not exist any other beings, besides ourselves, who are differently organized and endowed by different sensations. But if we see, not only the possibility, but also the necessity, of the existence of other beings, who are endowed with other sensations than are ours, then the world is in no case only such as we see it.

Our conception of the world shows only our relation to the world, just as a visual picture, which we form for ourselves because we see as far as the horizon, in no way represents the actual definition of visible objects. The other sensations, those of hearing, smell, and chiefly touch, by verifying our visual impressions, give us a more definite conception of the visible objects; but the fact that we know the visible objects as broad, thick, hard, or soft, and how they sound and smell, does not prove that we know these objects well, and that a new sense (in addition to the five), if it were given to us, would not reveal to us that our conception of things, as formed by the five senses, is as deceptive as that conception of flatness and diminution of objects in the perspective, which vision alone gave us.

I see a man in the mirror, hear his voice, and am fully convinced that this is a real man; but I come nearer, want to take his hand, and touch the glass of the mirror, and see my deception. The same must take place with a dying man: a new feeling is born, which reveals to him (both through the new feeling and the new knowledge given to him) the deception of the consciousness of his body and of all that which by means of the senses of this body was recognized by him as existing.

Thus the world is certainly not such as we know it: there will be other instruments of perception, and there will be another world. But no matter how that which we call the world — our relation to the world — may change, one thing is indubitably such as we perceive it, and always unchangeable, — it is that which perceives. And it perceives not only in me, but in everything which perceives. This perceiving one is everywhere and in everything and in itself. It is God and that for some reason limited particle of God, which forms our actual ego.

But what is this God, that is, the eternal, infinite, all-powerful, which has become mortal, limited, feeble? Why has God divided in himself? I do not know, but I know that it is, that in this is life. Everything which we know is nothing but just such a division of God. Everything which we cognize as the world is the cognition of these divisions. Our cognition of the world (what we call matter in space and time) is a contiguity of the limits of our divinity with its other divisions. Birth and death are transitions from one division into another.

The severest and most consistent agnostic recognizes God, whether he wants to or not. He cannot help but recognize that, in the first place, in his own existence and in that of the whole world, there is a certain meaning which is inaccessible to him; in the second place, that there is a law of his life, — a law to which he can submit, or from which he can depart. Now, this very acknowledgment of a higher meaning of life, which is inaccessible to man, but inevitably exists, and of the law of his life, is God and his will.

Such a recognition of God is much firmer than the recognition of God as creator, Trinity, redeemer, provider, and so forth. To believe in this manner is like digging a foundation down to the rock, to the bottom rock, and then building a house on it.

Men know two Gods: one, whom they wish to make subservient to themselves, by demanding of him through prayers the execution of their wishes, and another, such as we ought to serve, to the fulfilment of whose will all our wishes must be directed.

Everything I know I know, because there is a God, and I know him. On this alone can we rear a firm foundation, in relation to men and to ourselves, and to the extra-terrestrial and extra-temporal life. I not only fail to find this mystical, but, on the contrary, find that the opposite view is mysticism, while this is a most intelligible and accessible reality.

Nature, they say, is economical with its forces: with the least effort it obtains the greatest results. Even so is God. In order to establish in the world the kingdom of God, unity, and the service of one another, and to destroy enmity, God does not need to do so himself. He has imparted to man his reason, which frees love in man, and everything he wishes will be done by man. God does his work through us. There is not time for God, or it is infinite. Having implanted rational love in man, he has done everything.

Why did he do so, through man, and not in himself? A foolish question, such as would never have occurred to us, if we were not all spoiled by the insipid superstitions of the creation of the world by God.

There is no doubt that something is being done in this world, and that it is done by all living beings, and by me, by my life. Otherwise, why should there be this sun, these springs and winters, and, above all, this three-year-old girl, wanton from a superabundance of life, and this doting old woman, and this madman. These separate beings, who evidently have no meaning for me, and yet live so energetically and preserve their life so well, in whom life is screwed in so firmly, — these beings convince me more than anything that they are needed for some rational, good work, which is not comprehensible to me.

Once, while praying to God, it became clear to me that God was indeed a real being, love, — that he was all that which I embrace with a small edge and feel in the form of love. And it is not a sensation, an abstraction, but a real being: I felt him.

To love means to wish what a beloved object wishes. The objects of love wish the love of the other side, and so we can love what wishes one and the same. God wishes one and the same.

The love of God means to love what God wishes; but he wishes well to everything.

"Brothers, let us love one another! He who loves is born of God and knows God, because (it says, God is love, but we ought to say) love is God." However, God is also love, that is, we know God only in the form of love, and love is God, that is, if we love, we are not gods, but God.

Yes, love is God. Love, love him who has done you harm, whom you have condemned, and have not loved, and everything which concealed his soul from you will disappear, and you will see, as through clear water, the divine essence of his love at the bottom, and you will not have to forgive him, and will not be able to do so: you will have only to forgive yourself for not having loved

God in him in whom he was, and for not having seen him in your wanting love.

Love is the manifestation (consciousness) of God in oneself, and so the striving to get out of oneself, be freed, live a divine life. This striving evokes God, that is, love to others.

My chief thought is that love evokes love in others; God, awakened in you, causes an awakening of the same God in others.

I went on horseback from Túla, and thought about my being a part of him, which in a certain way is separated from the other parts. He is all, the Father. And I felt love for him. Now, especially now, I am unable to reproduce, and even recall, that feeling. I felt so happy that I said to myself: I thought that I should not find out anything new, and now I have learned a remarkable, blissful, new sensation, yes, a sensation.

Lying in bed to-day, I thought of love to God . . . (I wanted to say love of God, that is, divine love) — that the first and chief commandment is divine love, and the second, similar to it, and resulting from it, — yes, resulting from it, — is love of our neighbour.

The desire of good is not God, but only one of his manifestations, — one of the sides from which we see God. God manifests himself in me as a desire for good.

God, who is contained in man, at first strives to free himself, in order to widen and increase the being in whom he is; then, noticing the unforeseen limits of this being, he strives to free himself, in order that he may go out of this being and embrace other beings.

A rational being is not contained in the life of a personality, and since it is rational, it strives to come out of it.

The Christian teaching reveals to man that the essence of his life is not his separate being, but God, who is contained in this being. But this God is cognized by man as reason and love.

The desire for good for oneself, love of oneself, could have existed in man only so long as reason did not wake up in him. The moment reason woke in him, it became clear to man that the desire for good for himself, a separate being, is vain, because the good is not realizable for a separate and mortal being. As soon as reason appeared, only one desire for good became possible, — the desire for good for everything, because with the desire for good for everything there is no struggle, but union; not death, but transmission of life.

God is not love, but in the living irrational beings he manifests himself as love for themselves, in the living rational beings as love for everything existing.

Why are you so dispirited? You are expecting something great. You are waiting, it seems to me, for God in thunders and in storm, and not in stillness. The best is that there is "no place in which to give," as you say. In this the hand of God is most visible and perceptible.

You say that it looks as though I did not acknowledge God. There is some misunderstanding here. I acknowledge nothing but God.

I think I have written to you and told you my definition of God, which I would now give as an answer to the question as to what God is. God is all that infinite something of which I am conscious of being a part. And so everything in me borders on God, and I feel him in everything. This is not an empty phrase, but that by which I live.

I agree with you, no, I think like you in what you say about the comprehension and about God. I do not say I agree, because, speaking of these subjects, it is hard to express them precisely, and words may say too much or too little, and so it is impossible ever to recognize a given formulation as completely corresponding to one's comprehension. All I feel is that we think and feel in the same direction, and this gives me much pleasure. It is impossible not to think of these subjects, but each involuntarily thinks in his own way; it is not only useless, but it may be dangerous, to formulate them in such a way as they did in the symbols of faith. What we can and must formulate are the conclusions, as applied to life, as Moses did, Thou shalt not kill, and Christ, Resist not evil. But I repeat that I think in the same direction and fully agree with you that the measure of the comprehension is given according to purity, humility, and love.

We shall try to say what we know, what is necessary, joyful, and indubitable to us, and God (the same that you think we ought to obviate) will help us. In naming him, I acknowledge my insufficiency, and try — I his weak, partial vessel — to disclose myself, that part of myself which receives him, in order that he may enter me, so far as I can receive him and am worthy to. But the chief thing is, I need him in order that I may express whither I am going, and to whom I am going. In this uniform earthly life I may not feel him and get along without this form of thought and expression, but in passing over from the former life into this, and from this into another, I cannot help but call that whence I come and whither I go God, because this is the manner of expression which is nearest to the real meaning of the matter: from God to God, — from the extra-temporal and extra-spatial into the same.

What am I here, who am cast amidst this world? To whom shall I turn? From whom shall I expect an answer?

From men? They do not know; they laugh and do not wish to know, saying: "These are trifles. Do not think of them. Here is the world with its joys,—live!"

But they will not deceive me. I know that they do not believe in what they say. They are tormented like myself, and suffer terror before death, before themselves, and before thee, O Lord, whom they will not name.

And I, too, did not name thee for a long time, and for a long time did the same as they do. I know this deception, and how it oppresses the heart, and how terrible the fire of despair is, which is concealed in the heart of him who does not name thee. No matter how much you may flood him, he will burn your inside, even as he burned me.

But, O Lord, I have named thee, and my suffering has come to an end. My despair has passed.

I curse my weaknesses, I seek thy way; but I do not despair,—I feel thy nearness, thy aid, when I walk thy ways, and forgiveness, when I depart from them.

Thy way is clear and simple. Thy yoke is good and thy burden light, but I wandered for a long time off thy ways: in the abomination of my youth I, in my pride, threw off every burden, unhitched myself from every yoke, and taught myself not to walk in thy ways. Thy yoke and thy burden are hard for me, though I know that they are good and light.

O Lord, forgive me the errors of my youth and help me to bear thy yoke as joyfully as I receive it.

Awhile ago, as I was left alone after my occupations, I asked myself what I should do, and I had no personal wish (except the bodily needs, which rise only when I want to eat or drink); I felt so clearly the joy of the consciousness of God's will that I needed nothing and wanted nothing except to do what he wishes.

This feeling arose in consequence of the question which I proposed to myself when I was left alone in the stillness: Who am I? Why am I? And so clearly the answer came of itself: Whoever and whatever I may be, I am sent by some one to do something. Well, let me do that. And it gave me such joy and pleasure to feel my uniting with God's will.

This is my second living feeling of God. Before I just felt love for God. Now I cannot recall how it was; all I remember is that it was a joyous sensation.

Oh, what happiness solitude is! To-day I am so happy to feel God.

ON THE MEANING OF LIFE

From Tolstóy's diaries, private letters, memorandum-books, drafts of unfinished writings, and similar unpublished papers

1885–1900

ON THE MEANING OF LIFE

IT will give me pleasure to try to answer your question, for I see that it is put with full sincerity. The question is of prime importance and yet such as the majority of men do not put to themselves, assuming that there is no answer to it, or that it was given long ago, or that it is impossible; but it is a simple and necessary question, without which, it seems, it is impossible to live. You ask: What is the aim of human life? Why does man live, or, in different words, why do I live?

You are right when you say that it is only religion that answers this question. Religion, true religion, is nothing but an answer to this question; and the religion which I profess, the Christian teaching in its true sense, gives to this question an answer which is as simple and as clear as the question itself, if in the place of the word *aim* we put the word *meaning*.

The aim, the finite aim of human life in the world, which is infinite in space and time, is obviously not accessible to man in his limitation; but the meaning of human life, that is, why he lives and what he ought to do, must by all means be comprehensible to man, just as comprehensible as is to a workman his duty in a large factory.

The meaning of human life, as intelligible to man, consists in establishing the kingdom of God upon earth, that is, in coöperating with the substitution for the selfish, hateful, aggressive, irrational structure of life of another, which is amicable, fraternal, free, and rational.

The means for attaining this, that is, the answer to the question as to what a man must do, consists in what, according to the Gospel, forms the whole law and the prophets: to act toward others, as thou wouldst that they should act toward thee.

The answer, as you see, is very simple, but seems very obscure to us, because our animal nature, and our education, and the false religious teaching, accustom us to the belief that the meaning of life does not consist in serving God and our neighbour, but lies in our personal happiness. Having become accustomed to live for ourselves and our personal happiness alone, it seems hard to us to transfer the aim of our life to the service of God. But, no matter how hard it is, it is possible, and the more we accustom ourselves to it, the more natural it becomes, the more so since, by executing God's will, we by that very act attain the highest personal good, which before we regarded as the aim of our life, as it says in the Gospel, Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the rest shall be added unto you. Living a personal life, we seek the rest only, that is, the personal happiness, and we do not attain it, and do not contribute to the establishment of the kingdom of God, but, on the contrary, work against it. But seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we receive the rest, that is, happiness, if only by happiness we understand, not some external benefits for which we hanker, but spiritual ones, — peace, freedom, and joy.

I write to you, not what I have arrived at through reasoning, but what I have attained through experience: it is possible to live for the execution of God's will. If a man cannot live so at all times, he can do so in some of his best moments. If he shall find in it the meaning of life, he will live so ever more frequently. And the oftener he will live so, the more he will experience the reasonableness and joy of such a life and will be naturally drawn toward such a life.

The aim of life? There is no such aim, and there cannot be, and no knowledge can discover it. The law of direction, the path of life? Yes. To this, religion — wisdom, if you wish — gives an answer. Its answer consists in this, that it shows the falseness of all those paths which do not coincide with the one true way. By the rejection of the false directions it indicates and illuminates the one true direction. On this path a few little things can be seen. There are nearer aims which science points out, but it can in no way indicate the path.

In my weakness, in my incomplete subjection of my whole life to reason, I have put this question to myself, and have tried to answer it. If I were completely welded with the life of reason and lived in harmony with the law of the world, I should not think of it. But, without ascribing any importance to them, I must say that these are dreams that involuntarily pass through my head.

This is what has presented itself to me: the law of organic life is a struggle; the law of the rational, conscious life is union, love. On the organic life, the life of struggle, the rational life is born, and is connected with it. The aim is obvious: to destroy the struggle and introduce union where there was dissension: at first among men, then between men and animals, and then between animals and plants.

Such an aim has been put long ago. The Hebrew Messiah is nothing else: to forge spears into ploughshares, and let the lamb lie with the lions.

Now, it is an aim like this that flashes through my mind, but I ascribe no importance to it: I know that it is far from exhausting everything. What is dear to me is only the correctness of the direction of the path. The first condition for the correctness of the path, I know, is to walk on it with all my being.

The support and multiplication of life cannot be the aim of life, — so much is certain. But here there turn up two different points of view: one is this, that the knowledge in man — science in humanity — guides life, and that, therefore, the aim of life, as guided by knowledge, must be known to this knowledge; and the other, that man is a tool of reason for the accomplishment of the work of reason, which is not fully known to man, and that the aim of reason cannot be known, but what is known to man is only the path, the direction, in which reason living in man takes him. (Christ has said all this, and I never stop wondering at the logicalness and precision of his philosophic definitions.)

Indeed, can there be an aim for the life of the world and for the life of men (when they weld their life with the life of the world?) The concept of aim is a concept of the limitation of human reason, like the concept of reward and punishment, and so it is not applicable to the life of the world. If there is an aim, it must be attained, and then there is an end. For the world in general there can only be life: for the participants in the life of the world there is and can be only a direction, a path.

Besides: with the first point of view it is assumed that man's whole activity consists, or, at least, is guided by knowledge, and that for the attainment of the aim a mental activity is needed in the main (some think, exclusively). With the second point of view, a man, who knows the direction only, walks in this direction with all his nerves, and muscles, and nails, that is, he completely submits to the direction, which alone he knows, and with every step he sees new sign-posts on the road, but never the aim, which he can never see.

And only under this condition can man believe impli itly in the direction in which he is walking, and fulfil what reason demands of him. Only by placing himself under conditions of a support and a multiplication of life, which are in accord with reason, and only by having from the start chosen the one true direction of the path, — the path, — with all his being, can he with absolute certainty proceed and recognize himself in accord and union with reason; the nearer these conditions are, the safer; the farther, the more they are doubtful.

Not to see the promised land into which you have led others, or, at least, have been in some way instrumental in leading others, is the invariable law of your true life. The more actual the work of the true life is, the more remote are its consequences, and the consequences of a true life are not only remote, but at infinity, and so you cannot see them. You see farther than what your term of life is. You will see the house when it is built, and you will live to receive the rank of general; but you will not live to see the liberation, not only from the slavery of state, not even from the slavery of land tenure.

The most obvious proof that life is not in the attainment of the aim, but in the fulfilment of the message.

I have come to understand with a special, new force that my life and that of all is only a ministration, and has not purpose in itself.

Every life is meaningless, except the one which has for its aim the service of God, the service of the accomplishment of the work of God, which is incomprehensible to us.

It is a very common error to assume the aim of life to be in serving men, and not in serving God. Only by serving God, that is, doing what he wants us to do, can we be assured that we are not doing anything worthless, and it is not impossible to choose whom to serve.

God has given us his spirit, love, reason, that we may serve him; but we use this spirit in order to serve ourselves: we use the axe to whittle a handle with it.

The meaning of our life, the only, rational, and joyful meaning, consists in serving and feeling ourselves as serving the work of God, the establishment of his kingdom. At times it happens that you do not feel this service: it seems as though you had slipped off the collar, or the traces had given way; but at times it only seems so, because you got used to the collar and to the work, and no longer feel it. In any case, even if you do not externally feel your service, as long as you know in the depth of your soul that you have not refused to serve and have not slipped off your collar, you may be sure that you are serving: apparently you are having down-hill work, or the master wants to give you a breathing-spell.

The meaning of life now for me lies exclusively in serving God, saving man from sin and suffering.

But what is terrible is that I want to guess the road on which God wants to do it, and I may err and be over-hasty, and so, instead of coöperating, may interfere and retard.

There is one means for avoiding errors, and that is, not to undertake anything, but wait for God's call, — which is a situation when a man cannot help acting this way or that, for God, or against him; in these cases all the forces are to be strained so as to do the first.

Man uses his reason for asking, What for? and Why? applying his questions to his own life and to that of the world; but reason shows him that there are no answers.

With these questions one gets something like nausea and dizziness. The Hindoos say in reply to the question, Why? "Maya enticed Brahma, who existed in himself, to create the world;" but to the question, What for? they do not even invent such a stupid answer. No religion has invented, nor any human mind can invent, answers to these questions.

What does this mean? Namely, this, that human reason is not given for the purpose of answering these questions, — that the very putting of these questions indicates an aberration of reason. Reason solves only the fundamental question, How? And, in order to know how, it solves the questions, Why? and What for? within the limits of finality.

What how? How to live. How live? Blessedly.

That is necessary for everything living and for me. This possibility is given to everything living and to me, and this solution excludes the questions, Why? and What for?

But why and for what is blessedness not dissolved at once? Again an error of reasoning. Blessedness is the *doing* of blessedness: there is no other.

A live man is he who walks ahead toward where there is the light of a moving lantern, and who never reaches the end of the illuminated place, for the illuminated place is ahead of him. This is life, — there is no other; and only with such life is there no death, for the lantern illuminates *thither*, and thither you follow it as calmly as during the whole period of life.

But if man shields the lantern or begins to shed light around him or behind him, and not in front of him, and stops walking, there will be an arrest of life.

But if there is no meaning in my life, there is also none in the life of man and in that of humanity. Thus speak the ancient Buddhists and the modern pessimists. The same says the Gospel, but with this difference, that the Buddhists and pessimists say it as the last deduction, from which follows the negation of life; but Christianity says this as an indication of the false comprehension of life as held by the Gentiles, and of the necessity for another comprehension, the Christian, and of the confirmation of life.

Life has no aim which is comprehensible to man, so also says Christianity. But, though it has no comprehensible aim, it still has one, and man's vocation consists in serving this incomprehensible aim. An aim which is comprehensible to man would be a finite aim; but the aim which is now set before man is infinite, and the meaning of man's life consists in approaching it. The aim which is comprehensible only in infinity, as set before man, is incomprehensible to him, but the direction toward its goal is comprehensible.

"How can one live without knowing what will be, without knowing in what forms one will live?"

The real life begins only when you do not know what will be. Only then you create life and fulfil God's will. *He* knows. Only such an activity serves as a testimony of a belief in God and his law. Only then there is freedom and life.

We must be in relation to God's will, like a good thoroughbred little mare that I used to drive: she did not want to run away, or to stop serving me, but only wanted to guess what work I wished her to do. She tried now one leg, now another, now a third, now to the right, now to the left, now raising her head, and now dropping it.

Even so we must do.

For me Christ's teaching became most comprehensible and most fully took possession of me, when I saw clearly that my life was not mine, but his who gave it to me, and that the aim of life was not in me, but in his will, and that it was necessary to find it and to do it. This transformed me.

If God would only free us from the evil one, from the devil, who is the ego in me and you. If only I shall not forget that my life is not for to-morrow, not for the ensuing year, not in Yásnaya Polyána, not in Moscow, not with X—— nor without her, but in serving the Father everywhere, always, and with all men, and all is well. . . .

This is what we ought to be like, as Lao-tse says,— like water. If there are no obstacles, it flows; if there is a dam, it stops; if the dam breaks through, it flows again; in a square vessel it is square; in a round vessel it is round. For this reason it is most needful and strong.

The force with which we are convinced of something is full, complete, imperturbable, not when the proofs are logically incontrovertible, nor when the feeling coincides with the demands of reason, but only when man has become convinced through experience, having tried the opposite, that there is but one path.

Such conviction is given us as to life's being but this: the following of God's will.

Imagine that a beloved woman has promised you a rendezvous in the evening. How are you going to pass the day? How will you prepare yourself for this meeting? How afraid you will be that you will die, that the world will come to an end before the meeting! If only the meeting takes place! After that let come what may.

This is what desiring means. It is in this way that I should like to wish to do God's will, and just as passionately to wish for this alone, — its fulfilment. Is this possible?

Is this possible? Yes, it is. All that is needed for this is to know just as clearly what it is about and to be conscious of one's labour, and that there has to be a sacrifice.

God aid you to rejoice without cessation that nobody can anywhere or at any time interfere with you, — to rejoice at the fulfilment of his will, so long as you fulfil it in purity, humility, and love.

You ask: "Why live, how live, and what shall I do, in order to have a right to live?" First of all we must transpose the questions, and answer the question as to how we must live, and then only we shall try to comprehend why. We must live. We have lived before all reflection: every day we sleep, eat several times, move, think. We are all like a horse in a treadmill, the wheel of which is moving below us, compelling us to move. We cannot help but live, and so the first and chief question, in my opinion the only rational question, is as to how we shall live. We all, and you, too, know the first answer: in the best manner possible. Thus all men have lived, that is, while striving after it; thus they live and will live.

The second question: What means are best? In what way best? The answer is clear for a man who knows himself only: as many enjoyments as possible. But as soon as a man understands that he is not alone and feels the sufferings of others, the first answer no longer satisfies him, — there appears a contradiction between the personal striving after enjoyments and his conscience. You are in precisely this contradiction. In order to solve it, you must abandon yourself to one of these two forces, — to the striving after the personal good, or to your conscience, — and abandon yourself without any provision, exception, or compromise.

To abandon yourself to the striving after personal happiness or to your conscience does not mean that you are to drown the voice of your conscience or of your personal happiness, but that in your consciousness you recognize only one of the two as life, as the true life. Sufferings, doubts, are due to the indecision of the question in the consciousness. If it were so that your demands of truth are not the demands of your conscience, but something impressed upon you externally, you would, by renouncing conscience, calm yourself and live and enjoy life, as long as you could. (Of course, it will end in suffering, I know. But you cannot take this on trust, if the demands of conscience have not yet wakened in you. But they will awaken, because the movement of all humanity is from the striving after the personal good to the demands of conscience. All this I say only as a very improbable possibility.) But if conscience is awakened in you, you must recognize once and for all that life consists only in the gratification of the demands of this conscience, and you will again be calm, and life will receive a meaning for you. For what is conscience? Conscience is that highest law of everything living, which every man recognizes in himself not only by the admission of the rights of everything living, but also by the love for it. The demands of conscience are what in Christian language is called God's will, and so the meaning of life and the answer to the two questions, "Why must we live and how must we act in order that we may have a right to live?" consists in doing God's will, which is cognized in our consciousness. To what will this bring you? I do not know; but I know that the clear consciousness of this will change your whole external life and will give your life a constant, more and more clear, joyful, and rational meaning. But if it is not clear to you what conscience demands, you will find an answer for it in the Gospel.

In order that I may answer your question, "What shall we live for?" you must first of all renounce all worldly considerations, all questions as to what studies are to be taken, or as to what may be agreeable or disagreeable for you or my parents, and vividly present to yourself the situation of a lonely, separate human being, which has lately, twenty or thirty years ago, appeared from somewhere, and to-day or to-morrow, in ten, twenty, or thirty years, must disappear somewhere.

Why should it be necessary for such a being to live, and for millions and billions of such beings, who are all in precisely the same condition? Obviously all this is not made for these beings, even as all the screws, wheels, and pegs of a large engine are not made for them, but in order to serve the common purpose of the engine.

The same is true of us: we are the instruments of that highest will, which through us does its necessary work. The only difference is that we recognize ourselves as living, and are able, if we do not admit that we are the tools of the highest will, to suffer from our situation, or, by recognizing ourselves as the necessary tools of life, to feel the joy of the participation in an infinitely great work, which is accomplished by the life of the world.

But you will ask wherein this work consists? To this I will reply that we cannot know all of it, but may always know when we coöperate with it, or when we work counter to it. Love relations to everything living, — first of all, of course, toward men, toward the nearest of them, — the sensation of love and the rousing of the same sentiment in others is a sign of the participation in the general work; the rousing of enmity and hatred in oneself and in others is a sign of counteraction to the general work.

Your letter has not only interested me, — it has drawn me toward you.

I think that you are seeking what every young man ought to seek, and what men cannot live without, although the whole life among the higher, well-to-do classes has formed itself in such a way as to make it possible for men to live without it. What you seek and toward what you are drawn, earlier than is the case with other men, by your nature, which is more serious than that of the majority of men, is the clearly cognized meaning of your life: What do I live for? Certainly not in order to procreate, send into the world, and educate just such people as I am, who do not know what they live for; and certainly not in order to make archæological investigations, which are of very doubtful utility to men.

We can live without anything, except an answer to this question. In the meantime it is considered in our quasi-cultured world not only as a sign of a certain mental superiority not to know this, but even to assert that it is impossible to know this.

It is only religion which will give an answer to this question. If that religion in which you believed is destroyed by your critical relation toward it, immediately look for another, that is, for another answer to the question as to what you live for. Just as you cannot be for a moment without a king, as they say, *Le roi est mort, vive le roi*, so one can much less be for a moment without this king in the head and the heart. Nothing but religion, that is, an answer to the question, What do I live for? will give you that which will make it possible for you to forget yourself, your insignificant, perishable, satiated, and intolerably exacting personality.

I have written of nothing but this in my books which are prohibited in Russia. If you read them, you will find in them the answer which I have found for myself. But if you have not read my books or, having read them, have not found that answer, I can tell it to you in three words:

I live in order to do the will of him who sent me into life. But the will of God is this, that I should carry my soul to the highest degree of perfection in love, and that in this way I should coöperate in the unification of all men and of all beings in the world.

Everybody decides this in his own way, and the truth about the sword and division remains none the less a truth for all, no matter how you may decide it. I want to tell you this much, — what I have learned by experience, — what you are to be guided by in similar circumstances, — in the crush of life, when one gets into it and feels that there is one, only one path, and that it will be bad if one does not get on that path. This is what I think:

It is not given to us to know the will of the Father, what it consists in, what he wants, why he has been doing all this (if I may express myself so from old habit and for the sake of illustration), what the aim of your life and of mine is; and when we imagine that we know the aim of the Father, we get entangled in a most cruel manner. We cannot know his purpose, if for no other reason than because it is infinite.

But we know, and we can always know, whether we are doing his will, — what we live for, what he wants of us. He holds us as by reins, and we, as a horse, do not know whither we shall come and why; but we know by the pain, when we are not going where we ought to, and by the freedom and absence of restraint that we are going right. And so we know by experience and with our whole being that the first, chief, and only (the rest being embraced by it) sign of the fulfilment of God's will is this, that we feel at ease and not pained, and even joyous. He, loving us, wanted that of us, and we know that it is necessary.

The second sign, but in dependence on the first, is this, that others should have no pain, that my activity may not call forth a groan of suffering. Now, here is the problem: one, as it were, excludes the other. But "as it were"! When this seems so, it is a sign that life takes place in the crush, that there is not much of a path and it is of indifferent breadth, that the true path is narrow, as narrow as the point of a knife, but it exists. Feeling the sufferings of others as one's own, as you do, one can and must find that path which makes one feel at ease. That will be when I have done everything which depends on me in order to alleviate the sufferings of others. There exists, there exists that path, dear friend. You must pray, that is, commune with God, and this path will be found. The harder this search is, the more joyful it is. Yes, man must be free and almighty, and there is that one direction along which he is free and almighty, and it can be found.

But there is also a third sign, which I have found for myself. This is not a diminution, but an increase of the soul. This sign is dear to me in that it verifies the choice. If an act, a manner of life, a path, takes away or diminishes the soul, it is not the right one. I cannot say that this sign can be taken as a guide, — God forfend, — but to use all my forces in the search of a path between the sufferings of others caused by me and the oppression which I experience, and to lay out this path for myself, it is possible to verify its correctness by means of this sign.

The true food of life consists in doing the will of him who has sent us hither and in completing his work. But the will of him who sent us and his work is this, that, in the first place, we should pay the tribute for the life given to us with good deeds; and good deeds are those which increase love in men; and his work is to increase the talent, to add to the talent, our soul, which is given to us. And the one cannot be done without the other. It is impossible to do good deeds, which increase love, without increasing the talent, one's soul, without increasing love in it; and it is impossible to increase one's talent, to increase the love in one's soul, without doing good to people, by increasing love in them. Thus, one depends on the other, and one verifies the other. If you do a deed which you consider good, but do not feel an increase of love in your soul, if there is no joy at this in your soul, know that the deed which you do is not good. And if you do something for your soul, and the good is therewith not increased in men, know that what you are doing for your soul is useless.

Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the rest shall be added unto you. Seek to be the doers of God's will, and nothing, nothing more. There will be everything: righteousness, and joy, and life, not to speak of bread and raiment, which are not needed. All that is needed is the daily bread, the food of life, of which Christ has spoken.

The fulfilment of God's will is the work of life; but wherein does the will of God consist? Shall we do this or that act, in order that we may do God's will? Shall we place ourselves in such or such conditions: give up the property, leave the family, arraign people? Shall we go to Nineveh or to Jerusalem? and so forth. And there is no answer.

Neither the one, nor the other, nor the third is necessary, and no condition or act corresponds to the fulfilment of God's will; it not only does not correspond, but it even interferes, because every action according to one's own will, every change of situation, is an insubmission to the will of God. But the fulfilment of God's will, like his kingdom, is within us: the fulfilment is not in acts, but in submission, in a meek and humble relation to the demands of the life, in which one happens to be.

You say: the demands are contrary to conscience, or there are several contradictory demands, or none at all.

All you have to do is to bear yourself meekly and humbly in respect to the demands, if they are contrary to your conscience, that is, to refuse to fulfil them, without boasting or fury, but with humility and meekness; or, bear yourself with meekness and humility in respect to the demands which seem to be contradictory, turning away from your will, in the presence of God alone, and the contradiction will be removed. But it is impossible that there should be no demands. Even the mere needs of the body are demands, and it is possible to eat and sleep and cover oneself with meekness and humility.

Yes, the will of God is not in this, what to do (what to do life shows), but how to do. *How* is that which creates the true spiritual life.

I lately thought of this, that it is the business of a Christian to do the will of the Father; but wherein is the will of the Father? How are we to find out, so as not to make a mistake? Or I might begin to think that it is the will of the Father that I should preach, or live this way or that way, — live with the family, or without it. And if you begin to question yourself in this manner, you will never find out wherein is the will of the Father, and you will arrive at doubt and dejection: why are we commanded to do the will of the Father, and not shown in what it consists?

And this is the way I think about it: that the will of the Father is clearly shown to us, but that we do not seek it where it is shown to us. We think all the time that the will of the Father can be in external works, like Abraham's going into a strange land, and so forth; but the will of the Father is only in this, that we should be meek and humble in the yoke into which we are hitched, and that, without asking whither, why, what we are hauling, we should pull as long as we have strength, and stop when we are told to, and should pull again when we are told to, and turn whither we are told to, and not ask why and whither. "Take my yoke upon yourselves and learn of me, because I am meek and humble."

Be meek and humble, be satisfied with everything and prepared for every situation, and you will do the will of the Father. Thus, to fulfil the will of the Father, it is necessary to find out, not what to do, but how to do what we are called to do.

Life is in the doing of the will of God. In what does this will of God consist?

Everything which we may set as our aim, as the will of God, — everything is insufficient, incomplete, — everything is only a sign, but not the will itself of God, just as an individual labourer cannot understand the whole work of the contractor. (However miserable and petty this comparison of the will of God is, that is, the comparison of everything, with the will of the contractor, it by its very inadequacy shows how impossible it is for man to understand the will of God.) We, too, have a sign that we are doing the will of God, but the will of God we never know. By all these signs we can tell that we are doing his will; but that wherein his will consists will always remain a mystery to us.

And so it must be. There could be no life, no eternal life, if the aim toward which we strive were intelligible to us, — consequently, finite.

But there are given to us the most incontestable signs that we are living according to his will, and not contrary to it, as the reins permit a horse to go in one direction only.

The very first, chief, incontestable sign, which we are so prone to neglect, is the absence of a sensation of spiritual suffering (as with the horse the absence of the sensation of pain from the bit). If you experience full liberty, which is not impaired by anything, you are living according to God's will.

Another sign, which verifies the first, is the unimpaired love for men. If you feel no hostility toward any one, and know that people do not feel evil toward you, you are in the will of God.

A third sign, which again verifies the first and is verified by it, is spiritual growth. If you feel that you are becoming more spiritual, if you conquer the animal, you are in the will of God.

We know, we know for certain, when we are living according to the will of God; but we do not know God's will itself, and we must remember, must know, that we do not know and cannot know it, and must not put forth external aims, identifying them with the will of God, no matter how high these aims may appear, as, for example, the instruction of men in the truths of religion, the actual establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, the indication of an example of a godly life, and many other things.

The mare knows for certain that she is walking according to the will of her master when the reins do not jerk her, but she does not know the master's will, and woe to her if she imagines that she does know this will. The master turns the bespattered mare from the highway into the mud and compels her to enter into a dirty yard, which is crowded with other horses. It seems clear to the mare that it is the master's will that she should pull a load along the highway, and she pulls the load; but the turning into the dirt of the yard and the keeping company with other horses, — that, according to the mare's judgment, is not what the master must want, and she is stubborn, and complains, and suffers. She does not know that the master turned her into the yard in order to put the load on other horses and to feed the mare, for he is compassionate with her, expecting a colt from her.

Even so I have often been stubborn, complaining of my fate and of the reins which led whither they led me, and I suffered. It was all due to this, that I imagined a certain realization in the world of God's will. There, I have given up my property, have renounced all luxury, and live, showing by my example how one can and must live according to God's will. . . . Suddenly I am turned to one side, into the mud, where it is crowded. I think that God's work is retarded and impaired by this; whereas it is really being accomplished by it, so long as the signs are in evidence that I am living according to God's will.

I am seeking for the nearest consequences, and am grieved because I do not see them, and I do not know those consequences which are a million times greater and are obtained in this roundabout way.

We must live for the purpose of doing the will of him who has sent us into the world, and we must live in such a way that this will can be fulfilled. The fulfilment of this will gives us the right to live, or, to express myself more exactly, gives us the assurance that our life not only has a meaning, but is also necessary and needful for him who has sent us into the world.

But you will ask: "In what does this will consist, and how are we to know when we do it, and when not?" This will demands two things of us: a constant self-perfection and a constant coöperation with the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, that is, of an order of things, in which all men would recognize themselves as equal brothers and would love one another. In order that you may know with each piece of work whether you are doing the will of him who has sent you, or not, you must ask yourself whether this work contributes at the same time to your perfection (but perfection consists in the increase of love) and to the establishment of the kingdom of God, that is, the increase of love in men. If the work satisfies only one thing, your perfection, but does not serve men by increasing the love in them; if it serves men, but does not evoke love in thee, increasing it, — it is not God's work, not the fulfilment of his will.

Briefly expressed, the meaning of life is this, that every live man is God's tool, a tool through which the higher power does its work. And so the meaning of life consists in doing in the best manner possible the work which this higher power demands of you. And you can always know whether you are doing this work, or not: conscience is an indicator of it. All you have to do is to listen to it and to try to make it more and more sensitive.

One has frequently occasion to hear and read controversies and discussions as to what should be the aim of human life, — internal moral perfection or the service of humanity, the establishment of the kingdom of God. This controversy can never be settled, because both sides are right: both aims are set before man and humanity, and one aim not only does not exclude the other, but, on the contrary, both coincide, and one conditions the other.

What aim must a mason set to himself in taking part in the work of rearing a structure, — the greatest perfection of the work of his day, or the building of the structure? The mason will reach the highest perfection of the work of his day only when he will have as an aim the building of the structure, and he can contribute to the building of the structure only when he will strive after performing the work of his day in the best manner possible.

Only by setting as an external aim the establishment of the kingdom of God, does man reach the highest perfection of life which is accessible to him; and only by striving after this highest perfection of life and obtaining it, does he coöperate with the establishment of the kingdom of God.

Both he who strives after the perfection of human life, after the establishment of the kingdom of God, without establishing it in himself, and he who strives after a personal self-perfection which has not for its aim the establishment of the kingdom of God outside himself, are equally in error and do not fulfil their vocations.

Man is placed in such circumstances that the only possible, true, rational good for him consists in the striving after personal self-perfection; but the personal self-perfection is such that it is attained only when man recognizes himself as a tool of God for the establishment of his kingdom.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

In proportion as a man attains internal perfection, he establishes the kingdom of God, and only in establishing the kingdom of God does he move toward internal perfection. Without the consciousness of this, that my effort coöperates with the establishment of the kingdom of God by the approach to the perfection of the Father, there would be no life. And so each of us lives only in proportion as he establishes the kingdom of God within himself and perfects himself inwardly.

The assertion that man may slight his moral obligations with the view of attaining general ends is like what a man would do if he asked: "What must the aim of a stoker, or water-carrier, or smith be in a manufacturing plant, — to look after the fires, haul water, forge a hook, or to care for the business of the whole establishment?"

Neither the one nor the other aim taken separately satisfies the demands of human life, because both aims are set at the same time before man and humanity, and one aim not only does not exclude the other, but on the contrary, both coincide, and one conditions the other.

In order to do God's will it is necessary to do his work; in order to do his work two things are needed, not separately, but both together: what is needed is reason and love, and truth and good; it is necessary for reason to be love-bearing, that is, for its activity to have love for its aim, or for love to be rational, that is, for love not to be contrary to reason.

An example of the first is the scientific activity of the mind: the investigation of the milky way, the finesses of metaphysics, the natural sciences, art for art's sake; an example of the second is the love for one woman, for one's children, for one's nation, a love which has for its aim, not the spiritual, but the animal good.

The fruit of the activity of reason is truth; the fruit of the activity of love is goodness. But in order that there may be fruit it is necessary for both activities to coincide. Goodness will come only from a rational love which is verified by truth, and truth will result only from a love-bearing activity which has for its aim the good of reason.

All this is not my invention, but I have seen it.

We all think that our duty, our calling, is to do various things: to educate the children, acquire a fortune, write books, discover a scientific law; but we need only one thing, and that is, that our life may be unimpaired, good, and rational, — not before men, leaving behind us the memory of a good life, but before God: to offer ourselves to him, our soul, better than it was, nearer to him, more in harmony with him. It is very hard to think so, still more to feel so. One gets so easily off the track in the direction of human glory, but this can and must be. Help me, God! I feel it at times, and even now.

I have been thinking of what one ought to remember in moments of dejection of spirit, of grief, fear, annoyance, or anger at people:

Remember that your life is only in doing the will of God upon earth; but it is impossible to do the will of God: you can only increase your spiritual essence; and you can increase your spiritual essence by the observance of purity in your animal, of humility in your human (worldly), and of love in your divine life. But for the observance of purity you need privations, for humility — ill fame and humiliations, for love — the enmity of men toward you ("If ye love them that love you, what reward," etc.). And so, what you call sufferings, what you complain about, what causes you worry, what you are sorry for, what you fear, — all this is nothing but privations and pains, or ill fame, offences, humiliations, or enmity of men toward you; but all these are necessary for you, in order that you may preserve purity, humility, love, — that you may increase your spiritual essence, that you may serve the kingdom of God, — for life. And so I must not be grieved, but rejoice at privations, and humiliations, and enmity.

Indeed, could God have placed man in such a terrible position, where he would bear privations, humiliations, and enmity, without receiving his rewards for it? This is not possible, and it does not exist. It is impossible to answer whether there is any reward in the other world, or not. The question is incorrectly put. First it is necessary to change the false view, which ought not to be, from which such a question can arise. It is as though lazy people, starving as the result of their laziness, should ask whether they will receive a reward in the next world, because they are obliged to work in order to feed themselves. There will be no reward; but we must understand that the work which gives bread is a necessary condition of animal life. Even so we must understand that the endurance of privations, humiliations, and enmity is a necessary condition of the spiritual life.

The chief delusion of human life is this, that it appears to each one individually that the striving after enjoyment and the disgust at suffering form the guide of his life. And man, all alone, without any guidance, entrusts himself to this guide, seeks enjoyments, and avoids sufferings, and assumes that the aim and meaning of life lies in this. But man can never live by enjoying himself, and cannot avoid sufferings. Consequently the aim of life cannot lie in this. And if it did, how absurd! The aim is enjoyments, and they do not exist and cannot exist. And if they existed, the end of life is death, which is always connected with sufferings. If a sailor decided that it is his aim to avoid the rise of the waves, whither would he sail? The aim of life is outside of enjoyments and sufferings. It is attained by passing through them. Enjoyments, sufferings, — they are the breath of life: the inhalation and the exhalation, the food and its discharge. To place one's aim in enjoyments and in the avoidance of sufferings means to lose the path which cuts through them. The aim of life is general or spiritual.

"Repent ye, come to your senses." You must understand the insipidity of the meaning which you ascribe to life. Look at yourself, and understand who you are, what you are, and what you live for. The personal good of the individual man, or even of the family or of the state, cannot be the aim of your life. He did not teach them anything new, but only opened their eyes to what they themselves cannot help but see, to this, that the meaning of human life does not consist in each man's acquiring his personal, frail, deceptive, and short-lived good at the expense of another. The meaning of your life, he said to them, can be only in the fulfilment of that will which, for the attainment of its ends, has sent you into this life. But this will, which consists in the establishment of the kingdom of God, that is, in the union and love of all creatures among themselves, coincides with that fundamental striving after the good which lies in your soul. You must understand that your life is not yours, not your property, but his who produced it for his own purposes, and that the highest possible good is given you only under the condition of doing his will. Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the rest shall be added unto you.

Be always ready for that hour. Be ready for it, like a master watching his house, like the virgins with the lamps, meeting the bridegroom. And not only be prepared to meet this hour, but work with all your might that it may be near, as the servants had to work, when the master going away entrusted them with various amounts of talents, according to their strength (Matt. xxiv., xxv.).

One side of Christ's teaching, which is connected with everything else and is even fundamental, was completely obscured, and even concealed from us by his deification, namely, his teaching of the embassy. Remember how often and from how many sides he says that he is doing the will of him who sent him; that he is nothing himself, but that he is an ambassador and unites his life with him who has sent him; that his whole life, its whole meaning, is the fulfilment of the embassy. Only our recognizing him as a special being, and not as a man, such as we are, could have concealed from us this foundation of his teaching.

I have now arrived at it, and understand it with my whole being. Endless doubts and obscurities in life in the fulfilment of Christ's teaching had always tormented me. I solved them the best I knew how, but I always felt my lack of clearness and firmness. And only now has it become clear to me that the solution of all doubts and difficulties in the execution of the teaching consists in this, that we do not recognize in life that one meaning which it has, and which Christ has pointed out to us, — the service of truth (that higher truth which you comprehend) and its implanting not only in men, but also in the whole world.

Life is given you with your reason for this very purpose, that you may introduce this reason into the world, and so the whole of life is nothing but this rational activity as manifested in me. Christ understood himself as an ambassador, and so taught us. Every one of us is a power which is conscious of itself, which is conscious of its common aim, and so joyfully tends toward this aim, — a flying stone that knows whither it is flying, and that it is itself nothing, a stone, and that all its significance is in this flight.

We need only make this view of life our own (namely, the force of Christ's teaching) and all terrors and doubts disappear. My chief work does not consist merely in keeping the five commandments, in not having any property, in not sinning, — all those are not works, but conditions under which I can be sure that I am fulfilling my calling, and forms of my interaction with others, — but my work is to live, by introducing the rational principle into the world, using for that purpose all the means at my command.

I can fall, sin, err, — the work of my life will not change in consequence of this, nor will my happiness and the peace of my life. But with this view the idle commiserations, and the wishes, and the terror of death, are annihilated, and the whole of life is transformed into the present.

If my whole life consists in shedding upon others the light which is within me, that is, if my life is in the light, my death not only fails to be terrible, but is joyous, because each of us with his personality dims the light which he bears. Physical death frequently contributes to that light in which life is centred.

The practical application is this, that each of us must place all the interests of his life in carrying the truth through life and implanting it in others, and then there will be no doubts and no sufferings and no idleness for him. Each of us is always surrounded by men, and so can always do his work of life.

How we must always remember our dignity of God's ambassador, to whom God's work has been entrusted! If I were the Tsar's ambassador in Turkey, how I would take care of myself! But now I am God's ambassador in the world, and so everything must give way to that. The Tsar may not find out something, but here it is impossible to conceal anything.

Man is an ambassador, as Christ has said, — that's it, an ambassador, to whom all that is important is to carry out what has been entrusted to him, and who does not care what they think of him. Let them think ill: sometimes that is necessary, provided the embassy has been accomplished.

We are sent to walk over that inclined path, carrying through it that light which has been entrusted to us. And all we can do is to aid one another on the path to carry this light, but we detain and push one another, and put out our light and that of others.

If we do not look upon our life as upon an embassy, there is no life, but only a hell. I must remember, not only that I am an ambassador, entrusted with some work, but also that I am an ambassador who must guard, and uplift, and increase himself. Both are the same: one can uplift himself only by doing his work, and by uplifting and increasing oneself, one can do his work.

To live in godly fashion means to wish what God wishes; but God wishes the good of the world; but the good of the world is obtained by increasing love in it.

To live in godly fashion means to live for the good of self as not separated from other beings.

Does not to live in godly fashion mean to give life to others, to rouse in others the spiritual, true life?

One can live badly only with lusts, and well — with this alone: with goodness, with the desire, the effort to be good, better.

My life is not mine, — cannot have my good for its aim, — but his who sent me, and its aim is the fulfilment of his work. Only by fulfilling his work can I obtain the good.

You know that; but for me it is so important, such a joy, that I rejoice at every opportunity to repeat it.

The aim of life is the good. The good is only in serving God. Serving God is in the increase of love in the world. The increase of love in the world is obtained only through the increase and manifestation of love in oneself. But love in oneself gives us that greater good after which we strive.

The aim of life is as little the reproduction of ones like, the continuation of the species, as the service of men, — just as little the service of God.

To reproduce one's like, — what for? To serve men? And what are those to do whom we shall serve? To serve God? Can he not do without us what he wants? But he can want nothing.

If he commands us to serve him, he does so for our own good. Life can have no other aim than the good, than joy. Only this aim, joy, is fully worthy of life.

Renunciation, the cross, to give up life, — all this is for joy's sake.

The joy is and can be impaired by nothing, and is constant.

Death is a transition to new, unexplored, entirely new, different, greater joy.

There are springs of joy which never run dry: the beauty of Nature, of animals, of men, are never absent. In prison, — the beauty of the beam, the fly, the sounds. The chief spring is love, — mine for people, and the people's for me.

Beauty, joy, only as joy, independently of the good, is disgusting. I made this clear, and gave it up. The good without beauty is tormenting. Only the union of the two, no, not the union, but beauty as the crown of the good.

Mill says that humanity will get a greater share of happiness when every man will pursue his own happiness, under the condition of observing the rules and conditions demanded for the good of others, than when man will set for himself as his only aim the good of all others.

That is true, only that by the good of each individual we must understand his spiritual good. that is, his agreement with the will of God, or, more simply, the gratification of the demands of his conscience (reason and love).

Let each man seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, let him put his life into this, and there will result the greatest happiness for all. But then it will turn out that the happiness of man will consist in observing those rules and conditions which secure the greatest good to all men, that is, we shall get precisely what Mill denies.

We are all labourers in life, charged to attend to the work of the salvation of our souls, — we may compare it with the watching of the fire given from heaven and kindled on the hearth of my body. My business is only to watch and kindle this fire within me (not to waste the material of this fire on anything but the burning), without thinking of what will burn from this fire or how.

It is not hard to thresh with several flails, but that things should go well, and the threshers should not get mixed (not merely threshing, but interfering with one another), one has only to think of oneself, one's measure of the beat on which to strike. But the moment you think of others and look at them, you get mixed. Even so it is in life. Think only of yourself, your work, and the work is this: to love, to increase this love in yourself, and not to think of others, of the consequences of your labour, — and the work of life proceeds fruitfully and joyfully. The moment you think of what you are producing, of the results of your labour, and begin to measure it with these results, the work gets mixed up and comes to a stop, and there is the consciousness of the vanity of life.

The master of life has given us work, to each one individually, so that the accomplishment of this work is very fruitful. He himself will utilize and direct this work, and will give it a place and significance. But the moment I want to find and determine a place for it and in conformity with it to modify it, I get mixed, see the vanity of the work, and am in despair. My business is to work, and he knows what it is wanted for, and how to use it. Man walks, God leads.

One work is, — to increase love in myself. I am a self-moving force, or a living spade, and its life consists in keeping the edges clean and sharp, and then it will work, and the work will be needed. Keep it sharp, and sharpen it all the time, — make yourself better and better.

What seemed irrefutable from the social point of view appears meaningless from the Christian point of view. This change is due to the change of aim which is placed before man. The Christian teaching puts a different aim in the place of the one set by the social teaching.

The aim which Christianity sets to people is not the good of this or that totality of men, attained by the fulfilment of the will and of the laws of this totality, but the highest good of all men and of the whole world, which is attainable by doing the will and keeping the law of God.

It is possible to think that we can live for God, coöperate with the establishment of the kingdom of God, mainly by persuading people to be good, to refrain from offences, — by establishing the lives of other men.

This is a delusion: we can live for God only by loving men, by manifesting love, infecting others with love, making them believe in love.

I must know this now by all means, and I decide that it is not necessary to arrange anything or to admonish people, but only to treat them with love and kindness. This is the strongest means for establishing the kingdom of God.

No proposition has so obviously been verified by me through experience as that the meaning of life is in the increase of love. As long as I remembered this and lived by it, I was unceasingly happy.

Our life, the life both of an old and a young man, is subject to the possibility of an instantaneous cessation, and so we must not put off the fulfilment of our life's work, — serving God and men, — but we must live and serve God and men at once, every minute of our life. But serving God and men consists in the increase of love in ourselves and in others, and this we can always do under any conditions.

It is man's task to fulfil in this life that for which he has been sent into it by God, from whom he has proceeded and to whom he goes. What God wants of man is that he should expend his life, his body, in order to serve the good of the world and the good of all men and of all beings. This a man can do by renouncing his animal personality and evoking in himself love for men and for all beings.

In man there is a spiritual, immortal, divine essence and his animal personality. If man thinks that his life is in his body, he will serve the body, will ruin his soul, and will not accomplish his task; but if he recognizes as himself his divine, spiritual essence and lives for it in godly fashion, and wishes for it what God wishes, that is, not his good, but the good of all beings, he will fulfil his task and will receive the true good.

If you have any power of activity, let it be one of love; if you have not, and you are weak, let your weakness be that of love.

As an athlete attends to the increase of his muscles, so you must attend to the increase of love or, at least, to the diminution of malice and lying, and there will be a full, joyous life.

I just thought that I must remember that the time for the fulfilment of the work set for me in this world is on the decline, and that it is a sin to waste it unproductively, that is, not in the service of God's work.

No matter how much I have reflected on the question of the relation of God's work to the internal perfection of love, I cannot get away from that proposition that the problem of life — the execution of the divine work of the destruction of disunion — is equal to an increase of love, and that this work can be accomplished only through works in which there takes place an inner perfection in love.

I write and I think as follows.

The aim of life is the permeation of all its phenomena by love, — a slow, gradual transformation of an evil life into one that is good, — the creation of the true life (for the true life is only a life of love), — the birth of the true life, that is, of the life of love.

"What is the essence of that work which ought to proceed in parallel lines with a strictly regulated life?" you ask.

The work which you are called to do in life is of a twofold nature, though it is attained by one and the same action: the external work consists in this, that with our life we should coöperate in the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, that is, the substitution of concord, mutual aid, and union for enmity, struggle, and disunion, — a condition when all the spears should be forged into ploughshares, etc. We can contribute to this by truthfulness in words and deeds. The internal work consists in perfection, in the approach to God: "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." But in order that we may constantly improve, it is necessary to increase love in ourselves, that is, widen the circle of love in ourselves, to love, not because it is agreeable to us, but as God loves his creatures, in order to wish and offer them the good. But in order to increase love in ourselves, we must not interfere with its manifestation and growth. It always strives of itself after increase. What interferes with the manifestation of love is the offences. Now, the offences consist in regarding as the good and as the aim of one's life the good of the animal personality, and not the increase of love. The increase of love is that action by means of which both aims are attained: the coöperation in the establishment of the kingdom of God, and the attainment of the highest perfection. . . . Such a life has a greater probability even of an earthly happiness than a worldly life, which has for its aim the good of the animal personality. Such a life does not exclude all the most accessible joys, which are furnished by Nature, and by merriment, and singing, and friendship, and communion with men and animals.

Life for oneself is torment, for one wants to live for an illusion, for what is not, and this not only fails to be happy, but cannot be at all. It is the same as clothing and feeding a shadow. Life is only outside ourselves, in the service of others, and not in the service of relatives and beloved persons, — this is again for self, — but in the service of those you do not love, — better still in the service of your enemies.

The whole life which I lead is only a *tâtonnement;* but life ought to be built firmly on this: to seek, desire, do nothing but good to people, — to love and increase love in them, to diminish enmity in them. The good of men? What is the good? This, — love. I know this in myself, and so wish men nothing but this, and work for nothing else. To live boldly by this, and not by groping, means to forget that you are a Russian, a lord, a peasant, married, a father, and so forth, and only to remember this: before you is a live man; as long as you live, you can do what will give him and you the good, and do the will of God, of him who sent you into the world, — you can unite yourself with him in love.

I have experienced the joyous feeling of transferring the meaning of life to a desire to serve God by means of serving men, — a desire for the good for all men with whom I meet.

Such a life is possible and joyous.

Ask yourself well which of the two you want: that you be glorified at once, that you may see the fruits of your works, but that doubt in your work be possible? or, that you should be misunderstood and scorned to the end, but that your work should certainly be the work of God?

How terrible it is to forget God! But this is done imperceptibly. Works for God give way to works for men, for glory, and then for oneself, for one's bad self. And when you rub against this badness, you want to raise yourself again.

Frequently one wastes his spiritual powers for nothing. That is a sin. These powers are given for serving. They ought to be spent on nothing else; but, as it is, out of decency, out of ambition, out of apathy, you waste yourself in such a way that no strength and no time is left for serving.

Whether you have done what you ought to receives an enormous importance, because the only meaning of your life is in this, whether in the short period of life given to you you are doing what is wanted of you by him or it that sent you into life.

Are you doing the right thing?

The pagan conception tells you that your life is your carnal possession; Christianity tells you that your life is that vineyard which was given to the husbandmen with all the trees and the well and fruit, only that the husbandmen, making use of the vineyard, might give its fruits to the owner.

We are given but a short time to stay here. Now, now, we shall all be taken back there, all at once or singly, — some are being already taken away in our sight, — and we have the choice: to pass this short, indefinite period in a joyful manner, abandoning ourselves to our innate feeling of compassion and love for one another, or to quarrel, contend, fight, and with all cruelties to establish an order of things which, we know, will not last even a few years, and which we do not approve of; to pass the moment given to us, loving one another and practising mutual love and kindness, or to use all our strength for the purpose of tormenting and infuriating one another as much as possible during this short space of time, and with malice, reproaches, and curses to be taken back whence they let us out.

In the comprehension of truth, that is, of what is wanted of you by him who does his work through you, only in this does your life consist.

Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the rest shall be added unto you.

In caring for worldly matters, for what to you seems to be necessary for securing your carnal personality and the lives of other people who are bound with you, you will obtain, neither the good of this personality, nor the good of the other people, though you put it before you as your aim; but in caring for the truth of the kingdom of God, which is obtained by recognizing and fulfilling that degree of truth which is revealed to you, you attain both your own good and that of the other people, and fulfil what has been implanted in your reason and your heart. How can you help doing this?

Men have assured themselves that this is not important, that something else is important. But there is nothing more important in the world than performing the truth, which is revealed to man.

Nothing but this one thing is needed, namely, what we neglect, — the fulfilment in little deeds of the truth which we know. The fulfilment of the truth by every individual man is the most important work.

Man's life of suffering, which is liable to be severed at any second, not to be a coarse sneer, must have such a meaning that the significance of life is not impaired by its long or short duration.

If a man knew for certain that his life comes to an end with this life, what would he do in the decline of his years, in which I am? All the present affairs have already passed into other, younger hands, so what is he to do?

Only when you believe that life does not end here, there is left an always most important and always interesting and necessary work over one's soul, which does not perish, but will be necessary there.

Of late I have frequently thought of one long known consideration, which with especial vividness passes now through my brain and braces me up; it is this: to express in the simplest and clearest form the meaning, essence, and aim of life, I should say, as it is said in John vi. 38, and especially 39: to increase in me, to bring to the highest possible divineness that spark, that comprehension, which is given and entrusted to me, as a child is given to a nurse. This definition of the meaning of life is broader than any other, — it includes all the others.

Now, what is needed, in order to fulfil this, to raise up this child? Not luxury, but work, struggle, privations, sufferings, humiliations, persecutions, precisely what is many times said in the Gospel. And it is this which we need that is sent to us in the most varied forms, both in small and in large proportions. If only we know how to accept it all in the proper manner, as necessary, and so joyous work, and not as something annoying which impairs our so well-arranged life.

Generally the following mistake is made. They say: "Here are circumstances which impair or threaten to impair our good life; we must as quickly as possible obviate and overcome these circumstances, in order that we may be able to continue our good life." In reality we ought to look upon the matter in a directly opposite way: "Here was a life which we established with great internal struggle and labours, and this life satisfied our moral demands; but now there appear new circumstances, which put forth new moral demands: come now, let us in the best manner possible respond to these demands." These circumstances are not an accident which can be removed, but the demands of new forms of life, in which I must try myself and for which I must prepare myself, as I prepared myself for the preceding form of life.

God, according to my conception, needs no sacrifices. All that God needs is that we should keep and increase that talent, that divine essence which is given to us, which is entrusted to us, as the child is to the nurse, understanding by this talent not some mental increase or culture, but only the increase of our love for God and his creation, so that a man who fulfils this work of God will always inevitably fulfil everything else, and will, without knowing it, be in many ways useful to all men.

Life is given me only under the condition of doing works of love. Life is given me as a talent, for its increase; but life cannot be increased otherwise than by works of love. My true life is only the one which is increased by me. Thus, by not keeping this life, but expending it, I acquire the true, the eternal life.

The main thing is to understand what is said (Matt. xxv.), that our life is not given us for our enjoyment or pleasure, but that we are slaves, tools, organs of God, predetermined to do his work (but an apparently unnoticed work, which you will do, may be a thousand times more important than loud works, which are known to us), and if we do this work, we are happy, no matter where or in what circumstances we may be, whether well or ill, old or young. But his work is this: to increase the talent, the divine spark, entrusted to me; now, it cannot be increased otherwise than by loving our neighbours and serving them, as indeed it says at the end of that chapter.

To be firm and not lose courage it is necessary, above all, to understand clearly and not to forget the one rational and joyous meaning of our life, which is, not only that we should carry through this life, without putting it out, that spark of divine love, which is implanted in us and forms our soul, but also that we should fan it with all our might, in order that it may be carried into the other life, not as a spark, but as a flame.

Nobody can fail to recognize that we have all come from and are dependent on one and the same principle, which Christ calls the Father, and that the meaning of our life consists in doing his will, the will of this principle, and in using our life for the very work for which it is given to us. But this work, we all know indubitably, consists in this, that we should with every day and hour of this life become better, that is, more self-sacrificing and loving, and participate in making the world at least a grain better than what it was when we entered into life. We must ourselves become better and make the world better; I believe all agree that in this lies the problem of man's life. Everything else, if this be agreed upon, may be yielded, or, at least, we may ask permission not to express any opinion about the Trinity, or about revolution, or about the Pope, or about Marx, and so forth. "I do not ask of you any belief in anything," we may say, "except that we must try to become better and make the world better."

That the aim of life is self-perfection, the perfection of the immortal soul, that this is the only aim of man's life, is just, if for no other reason than because every other aim is senseless in view of death.

These last days, especially yesterday, I have been feeling and applying to life the consciousness of this, that the aim of life is nothing but being perfect as the Father, doing the same that he does, that he wishes us to do, that is, to love; that love should guide us in minutes of the most energetic activity, and that we should breathe it in a moment of the greatest weakness. The moment something is hard and painful, we need only remember this, and everything hard and painful disappears, and nothing but what is joyful is left.

To a man who seriously, sincerely makes use of his intellect it is evident that all aims are closed to him; only one is rational: to live for the gratification of the demands of God, of one's conscience, one's higher nature (it is all one and the same). To express it in time, — to live in such a manner as to prepare one's soul for the transition into a better world; to express it precisely outside of time, — to unite one's life with its extra-temporal principle, with the good, with love, with God.

I am afraid of one thing, — lest this for me so powerful and beneficently acting consciousness of the one rationality and liberty, of the joyousness of life in God, be dulled and lose its liberating action, which elevates me above the petty cares of life. Oh, that it were so for all! And always so! Last night I reflected in this light on various phenomena of life, and I felt such joy and happiness. I will wait for the examination, — I will prepare myself for it.

Last night I thought in a dream that the shortest expression of the meaning of life is this: the world moves, is being perfected; it is man's task to contribute to this motion and to submit to and coöperate with it.

To serve God and men, but how? With what? Perhaps there is not this possibility? It is not true, — this possibility is always given to you, — to become better.

There is but one meaning of life: self-perfection, — to improve one's soul. Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

When you are oppressed, when something torments you, remember that in life you alone are the life, and immediately you will feel easier and happier. As a rich man rejoices collecting his wealth, so you rejoice, if only you have placed your life in this alone. In order to attain this there are no obstacles. Everything which appears as grief, as an obstacle in life, is a broad step which places itself of its own accord under your feet in order that you may rise.

Each of us is a light, a divine essence, love, the son of God, enclosed in the body, in barriers, in a coloured lantern, which we have still farther coloured with our passions and our habits, so that everything which we see we see only through this lantern. We cannot rise to look above it; above there is just such a glass, also painted by us, through which we see God. There is one thing we can do, and that is, not to look through the glass, but to concentrate ourselves upon ourselves, to recognize our light, and to make it flame up. This is the one salvation from the deceptions of life, from sufferings, from temptations. And this is a joy, and always possible.

I imagined vividly what a joyous, calm, and absolutely free life it would be, if we gave it entirely to God, that is, if in all circumstances of life we sought but this: to do what he wants, — to do it in disease, in insult, in humiliation, in suffering, in all offences, and in death, which then is only a change of destination.

And weakness, and non-fulfilment of what God wants? What then? Nothing: a return to the consciousness of this, that life is only in this fulfilment. Minutes of weakness are the intervals between the letters of life, not life.

The main thing is, that we are labourers, from whom the result of the labour is hidden, who are not permitted to make use of the work. One thing is possible: the participation in the work, the uniting of our interests with those of the master.

It is remarkable how this last deduction at which one arrives was definitely and in this precise form expressed by Christ. It is not even a comparison, but a fact. The whole life of men is work: work for the master (factory hands and others), the work of ploughing and sowing, of the harvest and again of sowing, the improvement of the soil, of the breeds, of the buildings, intellectual inventions, — all that is not for oneself, but for the use of all, and in all that there is a good in the work itself. Such is the whole of life. We are permitted only to enjoy the good of the work itself. We are also permitted to transfer our interest to the interest of others, outside ourselves, to the interest of the master or the work; and this transference of the interest, this liberation of self from the interest of the perishing self, is possible only through work.

So it is in the labours of life. And just so it is in all life, if we look upon our whole temporal, carnal life, upon the direction of our will in this life (and we cannot look in any other way upon it), as upon labour for the work of God, or, more briefly, for God. Only if we pass our whole life with the purpose of fulfilling the will of God and of establishing the kingdom of truth, wherever we see it, and in the observance of the truth, in humility and love, even where we do not see it, — can we, in the work for God, renounce our own interest, in order to find an interest in the work for God. To say that you will make use of this work in the future is risky and inexact: it is impossible to say the rest. And why should it be? The participation in the work gives enough of the good. The moment you begin to take part in it, you feel the good; what, then, will happen if you give yourself entirely over to this work, and make a habit of it? Then the true good will be so great that it will not be necessary to imagine any other in the future.

Yes, this is a prayer which I will write down on my finger-nail: Remember that you are a labourer in God's work.

I have been thinking all the time of the harm of selecting an external aim for life. "Seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and the rest shall be added unto you." Sailor, be guided by the compass which is on thy ship, — a tiny needle which is a thousand times smaller than the ship, — and not by any visible object, not even by the stars: everything is deceptive but what is within you. Do not trouble yourself about writing an important work, nor about this, that men may learn the truth, nor that you may remain pure in the eyes of men; trouble yourself only about doing the will of him who sent you. But the will of him who sent you is that nothing should perish of what he gave you, but that, on the contrary, everything possible should be resuscitated, brought back to life, expanded, purified.

It is true that thy work and thy power have been entrusted to me. Now, thy work consists in manifesting thyself in me and in the world. In this alone does my life consist.

It is true that in me is thy power, given to me for the purpose of fulfilling thy work. But thy work consists for me in increasing thy power in me and in the world.

I throw a chip into the whirlpool of the brook, and watch it circling around. A steamer is only a little bigger, but still such a chip; the earth is a mote, a thousand years are a minute. Everything is nothing, everything material is nothing; the one real, indubitable thing is the law by which everything is accomplished, both great and small, — the will of God.

A compositor who does not know the language sets type better in that he does not guess at the meaning in his own way. Even so we must live, without guessing at the meaning of what we are doing, — not guessing at the work which we suppose God needs, but doing one thing after another according to what God commands, — setting letter after letter. Not I, but he, has given a meaning to the whole.

In order to know the will of the Father, we must know his true, fundamental will. The son's will always coincides with the Father's.

There will always be left one mystery for man, only one: What do I live for? There is but one rational answer: Because God wants it. Why does he want it? This is a secret, and this secret is covered only by the belief in God, by the belief that he, who is good, has done this for my good.

I have thought vividly and with joy of this, that my life and, so I conclude, the life of everything is the power of God, the whole power of life, which passes through me, through a (limited and organic) part of all, and I can allow this power to pass through me, or I may try to check it. My whole rôle in life is this: I cannot check it, but I can try to do so.

The life of the world presents itself to me like this: a liquid, or gas, or light, is streaming in through numberless tubes of various form. This light is the whole power of life, God. These tubes are we, all the beings. Some tubes are entirely immovable, others move a little, others again more, and, finally, we are very mobile tubes. We can let the light through completely, or we may bar it for a time.

What we call our life, our personal life, is the ability to cross the light, — not to let it through; but the true life is the ability to stand in such a way as to let the light through completely, without barring it. But when a man takes up this position, the motion of his life comes to an end. It ends when a man begins to take up this position. The motion of life ends, and then a man feels that he has done everything which he ought to do, only when he has removed himself as though he did not exist. When a man recognizes this negation of his personal existence, he transfers his life into what passes through him, into God.

I wanted to express more clearly in words, what is true, that there is in me God's power, which does the work of God; then I convinced myself that this is unnecessary. It is enough that I am not I, but the power of God acting in me. And so it says in John v. 19: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

What to us appears as the motion of our personal life is the motion of our form of life when we stand at an angle to the direction of God's will. But if we stand in the direction of God's will, it passes through us, no longer moving us, and then the illusion disappears, and we recognize that we, our life, is nothing but the power of God. Then there presents itself the necessity of transferring our consciousness from the integument of the form into the force of its direction. However, this difficulty is overcome of itself, and the question of immortality and of the future life is set aside. The consciousness of life is transferred from the moving form into the source of power, into the eternal, infinite will of God itself. From the consciousness of form I have passed to the consciousness of life itself. So how can I doubt that what alone exists, has been and will be, — that it will not die?

I am conscious of myself as of the power of life, which passes through me: the motion of my life is the wavering of this form, which stood at an angle to the direction of the power and which slowly took up a position in its direction. The axis of the direction is established, the motion stops, the carnal, personal life comes to an end, I pass into the power which goes through me.

But what is this infinite whole power? An eternal secret, and we need not know any further. All I know is that death is not terrible to me with it. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." The individualization, which was presented as the form through which I passed, comes to an end, and I unite with the *all.* I began lately to feel that when I die I shall not die at all, but shall live in everything else.

THE END.

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